

**Towards a Redefinition of Freedom and Subjectivity  
In Contemporary Society**

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### **Declaration**

I declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own,  
and that I am solely responsible for its composition.

Salam Hawa  
Edinburgh, July 1995



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## ABSTRACT

This work consists of a study of the historical, philosophical and political elements determining the essence of freedom and subjectivity in contemporary society. It identifies the origin of subjectivity in Renaissance Humanism, and demonstrates that Humanism's definition of individual freedom and subjectivity became a base upon which the Anglo-Germanic Romantics grounded their intellectual and political framework. The philosophical parallel between Humanism and Romanticism, the projects of which express subjectivity and freedom in terms of 'creation' and 'individualism', establishes a basis from which a study of postmodernism (French post-structuralism) shows that postmodernists, in spite of their critique of modernity, continue to define freedom and subjectivity along the same lines. It contends that the postmodernist critique of society espouses a severely limited notion of subjectivity, i.e. one which is basically negative and anti-social, and whose effect on the way individuals view themselves as socio-political agents is detrimental. This study is not one which aims to discount the importance of the postmodernist critique altogether. Rather, it shows that there are many elements which enter into the definition of freedom and subjectivity as a 'lived' experience in the world, such as those present in Hegelian philosophy, which are often concealed, or negated by postmodernism's rejection of dialectics in history. The study takes as central the Hegelian definition of the elements constituting the process of actualisation of subjectivity and freedom in society, and argues that all three identified intellectual movements, Humanism, Romanticism and Postmodernism, fail to recognise that the *other*, the means, is not a *thingness*, a whatness, nor is it other individuals, but is itself an *activity* the base of which is social, and whose telos is present in the objective order. The work argues that although postmodernism defends individual rights against a visibly declining social, political and ethical order, it does not present individuals with alternatives that are feasible and desirable in today's social and political context.

## Preface

The primary objective of the present work is to demonstrate that contemporary social and political thought bases its definition of freedom and subjectivity on Humanist conceptions, themselves the product of Medieval Christian thought. At first glance, such a contention may appear implausible due to the stark contrast which exists between the power structures of these societies. According to the Medieval tradition, God is all powerful, and the Church is God's instrument, the only institution capable of assuring individuals of the possibility of reaching heaven, i.e. freedom, in the hereafter. All individuals, including Kings, were at the mercy of the Church. By contrast, contemporary society has long separated the realm of political power from religious power, to the extent that the latter was made to stand outside the power structure altogether. However, this superficial distinction fails to recognise that the very separation between Church and state allowed the presence of Medieval Christian concepts of freedom and subjectivity to go unchecked.

Given the analysis that will be provided of the nature of the Humanist project for liberty, one may conclude that in contrast to the classical Greek notion of 'reason', the type of reason which developed during the Renaissance was not teleological. Reason was used to obtain knowledge of the end, but did not constitute the end as such. In this respect, Renaissance reason, and indeed Enlightenment reason, whilst able to transcend 'religious' control of reality in what was immediate and palpable, were unable to do so in terms of finality. It is difficult to state whether it was the nature of reason itself, or one acquired through practice, that was responsible for the failure of the philosophers of the past to break away from the dependency of reason on divinity. Nevertheless, the application of reason in the modern age, once the state became separate from the Church and value from morality, appeared purposeless, leaving many philosophers in this century to condemn it as the very instrument of oppression and self-delusion.<sup>1</sup> This study makes clear that reason as such is not a concept that can be taken in isolation from the social, political and ideological aspects which combine to define its nature and purpose.

Hegel demonstrates this fact clearly in his definition of a type of liberty that he believed was both possible and desirable. Hegel's definition of freedom as action which begins, in the first instance, in thought does not differ entirely from the postmodernist definition of freedom, but nevertheless goes beyond it in its adherence to the idea that only in action is freedom to be actualised. For Hegel, the idea of

freedom was necessarily one which combined the attributes of the past with the means of the present. Hegel sought to impart to us the benefit of knowledge of the past with a heightened understanding of the present, and of the self in the present. For Hegel, individuals, once aware of their dissociation from the earlier tyranny of the Church (which he took to be exemplified in the French Revolution's success in separating Church from State), will abandon the belief in freedom as realisable only and conditionally in the hereafter, and will seek their freedom in the here-and-now. Hegel believed in the idea that freedom is a product of this lifetime and can be enjoyed by the individual who is able to recognise that freedom is not necessarily 'absence of restraint', but in fact a product of 'necessary' choice and hence self-limitation. Thomas Mann defines freedom in a manner that is reminiscent of Hegel: "freedom always inclines to dialectical reversals. She realises herself very soon in constraint, fulfils herself in the subordination to law, rule, coercion, system - but to fulfil herself therein does not mean she therefore ceases to be freedom."<sup>2</sup>

Of course, it is in and through dialectics that Hegel is able to conceive of the possibility of making of freedom an experience to be enjoyed in the present. As is noted in chapter I of Part III, Hegel acquired his understanding of dialectics from earlier philosophical teachings, most of which were pagan.<sup>3</sup> By identifying each attribute with its negation, Hegel was able to introduce a theory of liberty that endowed its definition with the need for both absence of restraint, and restraint. However, unlike the earlier Humanists, freedom as absence from restraint constitutes for Hegel the freedom of thought and that of the will, and freedom as restraint is necessary in terms of the social and political system which establishes the laws of the state. Hegel maintains that freedom as self-determination depends on both elements for its actualisation. Free thought conceives of, and indeed empowers, the will, but only restrictions, i.e. choice, make self-determination possible. This conception is also not peculiarly Hegelian. Machiavelli in the *Discourses* made clear that the *ordini*, the laws and ordinances, were the necessary tools for the securing of liberty; individuals need to be coerced in order to act *virtuosi*, according to virtue, and hence maintain their liberty, which they would have abandoned without such constraint.<sup>4</sup> Machiavelli did not believe in the natural inclination of individuals to virtue, and therefore maintained that freedom for self-determination would only be available at a cost, that of coercion of the law without which individuals would always find a way to act in a cowardly way, and hence give up their liberty. However, unlike Machiavelli, Hegel did not believe in the power of *fortuna*, but rather in the power of reason and self-knowledge which he deemed capable of guiding individuals toward

the proper choice. For Hegel, unlike the individuals in need of coercive *ordini*, modern individuals will not need to be coerced into following the laws, but will recognise them as the direct expression of their own free will.

It should certainly be emphasised that the present work does not seek to blindly advocate the Hegelian solution as the one system holding the 'ultimate' definition of 'freedom as subjectivity', but rather that, by demonstrating Hegel's awareness of the bi-polar position of the concepts of *freedom* and *subjectivity* in the philosophy of his age, one is able to recognise the existence of an alternative which seeks to go beyond this bi-polarity in order to establish a doctrine which exemplifies their synthesis. The benefit of this is heightened when this alternative seeks to take into account the elements constituting the ideology and teleology of its age. Hegel's definition of freedom as teleological self-determination, that is based on the predominance of 'reason', posits itself as a project of liberty that responds to the needs of the individual of the modern age. It does so as it seeks consciously to break away from the elements which have kept humanity enslaved for many centuries. It has also to be emphasised that the present work does not advocate that one should take Hegel's work as the Medievalists did the Bible. But neither would it suggest that one reject, as do the postmodernists, Hegel's system because it may be proven in one aspect or another as untenable. The present work would warn against both extremes. It argues that there is much to be learned from Hegel's approach, especially in how it defines the elements constituting the present.

Hegel's work makes clear that we are in need of establishing clear definitions of our common purpose as humanity, and as actors in the world. He points to the fact that we have gone beyond the point of seeking to wrench the power from an unearthly deity through our will-to-knowledge, and that we are at a stage that demands clear and decisive action. We can no longer pursue our freedom as flight from and negation of the self, but must direct our purposes to the establishment of a truly free society. Contrary to Hegel, the postmodernists have shown a clear resistance to overcoming the Humanist and Romantics' stratification of humanity according to a particular system of 'value'. However, oddly enough, they have been equally instrumental in breaking down institutional and thought structures which were responsible for discriminating against particular groups and individuals in the multi-national state. This study hopes that in seeking to demonstrate that the tendency to define freedom as flight from the present and from the self is itself a product of past tradition, it has equally pointed the way towards establishing a project of freedom that



is a product of this age and this tradition. In this sense, the postmodernist emphasis on originality and creativity is essential and necessary, yet it would be advisable that a vigilant and discriminating eye should follow the process of such creation. We would no longer need to live in a 'bubble' separated from space and time, but would seek to live within the limits of both, actively defining our sense of self not in terms of flight, but of actual self-determination. Once it is clear that freedom is not about the active nihilation of the other, the other that is indeed our own self,<sup>5</sup> and that freedom is a possible experience in the here-and-now, then maybe we would seek to actualise freedom in our daily lives and project it as our purpose and end.

Finally, I should like to extend my warmest thanks to the individuals who have helped make this work possible. I wish to thank Mr. Richard Gunn for supervising the first half of my dissertation, and for introducing me to Hegel. Also I extend my deepest gratitude to Dr. Stanley Raffel and Professor Russell Keat whose help was instrumental in making the accomplishment of this work possible. My warmest thanks goes equally to the staff and secretaries of the Politics Department who can always be counted on for enthusiastic help and support. I extend my warmest thanks especially to Craig Johnston, Leda Vlachou, and Robert Mahoney whose unfailing support and advice have gone beyond the call of friendship. I wish to give my deepest gratitude and warmest thanks to Professor Douglas Moggach and Professor André Vachet at the University of Ottawa, Political Science Department, whose continued support, encouragement and enthusiasm have had a tremendous effect on me throughout my graduate years. Finally, I want to thank my family for its support and love, and especially my father Mr. Taha Hawa to whom I dedicate this work.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The work of the members of the Frankfurt School is one example. However, there is equal examples on the side of the positivists such as David Easton and his critique of the 'end of ideology'.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas Mann, *Doctor Faustus*, trans. H. Lowe-Porter, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p. 185.

<sup>3</sup>Such as Heraclitus. Cf. Chapter I, Part III the discussion on the contrast between Sartre and Hegel's conception of human ontology.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Q. Skinner, "Two Views on the Maintenance of Liberty," *Contemporary Political Theory*, Philip Pettit (ed.), (New York: Macmillan Pub., 1991), p. 36.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Julia Kristeva, *L'Etranger en nous*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1988); in this book Kristeva argues that the 'other', the stranger, signifies in fact the 'negative' side of the self, and that all xenophobic behaviour, ostracism and rejection is itself an act of fear of the 'unknown' that we conceal within us.

## Introduction

In the mono-theistic traditions, it has been established that the year two thousand shall herald the onslaught of the apocalypse, the end of the world, the day of judgement, etc.. Western individuals, long freed from the influence of religion, would hasten to add that belief in the apocalypse has faded away, that individuals are indeed the makers of their universe, and that no 'heavenly clock' is capable of changing the course of events. They claim that today's individual is living in a 'disenchanted' world which functions according to the laws of science and in terms of human reason. To question this statement is to put in question the state of affairs that has developed since the Copernican revolution, i.e. it means questioning the effect of the victory of science over religion. Yet, question we must, for it appears that an 'apocalyptic' sentiment is expressed daily, even by these philosophers and intellectuals who are supposed to be the most resistant to religious influence.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, although a product of 'religion-free' society, contemporary thought finds itself incapable of dealing with issues previously dealt with by the church, and with which science, as a 'value-free' form of knowledge, claims itself incapable of addressing.<sup>2</sup>

Contemporary society finds today's individual often defined as the unhappy individualist, product of capitalist society. For authors like Christopher Lasch, the capitalist mode of life appears in the throws of death, and "in its decadence has carried the logic of individualism to the extreme of a war of all against all, the pursuit of happiness to the dead end of a narcissistic preoccupation with the self."<sup>3</sup> Likewise, others like Baudrillard, regard the quality of the life lived as the product of a "decomposition"<sup>4</sup> of an earlier, more authentic life. This concept of 'decomposition' is critical of the modern liberal state, expressed in terms of Hobbes' *Leviathan*, i.e. the collective body directed politically and socially by one 'Head'. In this social and political context, decomposition does not occur simultaneously with death, but signifies the coming-into-being of the *life* of each heretofore conceived *part* of the collective political *body*. As such, this 'decomposition' is not death, but, as Bauman puts it, "disappearance,"<sup>5</sup> or dissolution of the promises of a quality of life originally posited by modernity. Bauman defines this preoccupation clearly when he states that the modern project did not fail, but that "its undoing was its success - too overwhelming, too complete. The quest for order has produced a hygroscopic, sanitized, hygienic bubble - odourless and germless; the inside of the bubble has lost immunity, capacity to be alerted by incoming danger, to defend itself: to tell danger



from happiness, evil from the norm."<sup>6</sup> Within this 'bubble' the process of decomposition is at hand. This break down is exemplified in the manner with which the old social and political body saw its members dispersed, seeking their freedom in the launching of "projects of collective emancipation."<sup>7</sup> They seem to have fallen today into a "loose heap of non-additive personal tragedies,"<sup>8</sup> where each 'decomposed' part of the old collective body is left to pursue games, the rules of which are rarely if ever put into question. Postmodernists claim that these rules were left to us as legacies from the Enlightenment, and constitute the foundations upon which this 'decomposed' state of affairs is based. This world, which "makes freedom into necessity (having first made necessity feel like freedom),"<sup>9</sup> thrives on the estrangement of its members. It is the world of the unfree, and, in virtue of being thus, is also the world of the non-subject.

Decomposition is unlike death, because it denotes a triumph over the latter: it is immortality in so far as it is simply disappearance. There is no dead body to bury and put away once and for all. This is possible because "it is not a challenge to be taken up, a task to be performed, a reward to be earned. Neither is it a project that can give meaning to the being-in-the-world. In the B-World [the world of decomposition], immortality dissolves in the melancholy of presence, in the monotony of endless repetition."<sup>10</sup> Unlike death, decomposition is reversible, revocable. In Baudrillard's terms, it is "cyclical reversal, annulment," which "puts an end to the linear time."<sup>11</sup> The cycle, unlike the linear form, signifies return to the beginning, starting anew, whereas linear time is metaphorically understood as the idea of 'no return'. As such, decomposition is unlike death, because it is not final, not 'forever'. There is no certainty of its permanence. It is a state in and through which the past, in terms of its thought and fashion, comes crowding in, becomes part of the present while remaining distinctly 'retro'. Bauman describes this aptly in his depiction of the B-World: "Objects come and go, but then come again, never to overstay their visit. They are condemned to the nomadic existence of commercial travellers. Last year's rubbish becomes the cherished antique, the last generation's fallen star turns into the idol of nostalgic dream, the killing fields of yore are invaded by pilgrims searching for 'our glorious heritage' of industrial or military triumphs. What was obsolete yesterday becomes a rage of today, and is doomed to slip once more into oblivion even before it has forced its way, with a fanfare, into the centre of today's attention. Mortality daily rehearsed turns into immortality; everything becomes immortal, and nothing is. Only transience is durable."<sup>12</sup> In social and political terms, the B-World depicts the fragmentation of the liberal state. However,

postmodernism does not propose an alternative order that will put the pieces together within the 'bubble' itself, nor does it present a radical, revolutionary viewpoint that is capable of bursting it, thereby allowing a totally new order to come into being. Postmodernism depicts today's society as suffering from a twofold affliction. It can neither cure itself within its own social and political sphere, nor is it prepared to abandon this virtually 'eternal' cycle of decomposition.

Postmodernists,<sup>13</sup> as we shall see in Part III, agree with Bauman's and Lasch's definitions of the present. However, unlike them the postmodernists are not critical of this 'bubble-like' society and its on-going cyclical repetition. Rather, they claim that this type of time-circularity, decomposition and recomposition, is indicative of a distinct type of freedom and subjectivity, one that is achievable in terms of 'textuality' and the 'word'. For example, Derrida believes in the ahistorical content of a text, claiming that by de-constructing it, its contents not only yield specific knowledge bound within epoch and context, but point to a third dimension present in and through the words used. This third dimension is posited as a novelty, a dimension of reality that has heretofore eluded writers and readers of past generations. Textual deconstruction intends to 're-view' conceptualisations of reality, and therewith become capable of bringing into being new possibilities to perceive the past, live the present and conceive of the future. However, is this activity truly an original one? Is it simply the reaction of those thinkers and intellectuals disillusioned by the influence that scientific rationality enjoyed since the Enlightenment? Or is it perhaps instead an instance of a repeated pattern of intellectual movements of the past - indeed, did not the 'Renaissance' itself (the concept of *rebirth* which heralded the *birth* of the modern era) *equally* indicate the striving after the repetition of a past tradition? For as we shall see in Part I, the Italian Humanists' return to the Classics issued with it a re-interpretation of these earlier works and debates in a form that was, at the time, both a repetition and an innovation. For them, this return to the pagan Classics provided the medium and the elements to break away from the all-encompassing control of medieval clergy and stultifying community relations. Through the Classics and their medieval Muslim interpreters, the Humanists were able to grasp the idea of individuality, not only in terms of the state of being separate from the community, but also, and more importantly, as self-determining subjectivity. In this process of deconstruction and repetition, Humanism was able to take flight from the limits of its reality in order to establish human primacy over all earthly life.

Inasmuch as Humanism sought to establish the *distinctness* of humanity and thereby give it form, postmodernism seeks to *redefine* humanity not in terms of its constitution as a superior life-form (i.e. in terms of physiological and rational nature), but in terms of its ontology (i.e. these elements which cannot be measured in and through science, but which constitute the essence of every individual and make of him or her a unique being). Postmodernists are concerned to save the human value of life from the fetishism which accompanied modernity and scientific reason. In essence, they appear as seeking to reverse the results of the seventeenth century's or the scientific revolution's move from an essentially *qualitatively* based physics and metaphysics to a Platonic and Pythagorean *quantitatively* [geometrically] based physics and metaphysics.<sup>14</sup> With the quantification of all reality, characteristic of the Enlightenment, the universe appears essentially *indifferent*,<sup>15</sup> that is to say, the universe would appear to be made of substance that is wholly and utterly distinct from the human ego, and with that remain outside the definition of human ontology. This indifference is the result of the refusal to acknowledge that the free subject is 'finite', 'mortal', and that this perceived feeling of 'immortality' is an illusion.

For this reason, today's individual is identified as the "economic man [who] himself has given way to the psychological man of our times - the final product of bourgeois individualism, ... the new narcissist, ... haunted not by guilt but by anxiety; ... liberated from the superstitions of the past, he doubts even the reality of his own existence ... His sexual attitudes are permissive rather than puritanical, even though his emancipation from ancient taboos brings him no sexual peace. ... He extols cooperation and teamwork while harboring deeply antisocial impulses. He praises respect for rules and regulations in the secret belief that they do not apply to himself."<sup>16</sup> This particular preoccupation with the self, and seemingly socially estranged behaviour, cast the postmodern individual as one who is unaware of the conditions which constitute his/her social and political reality, and therefore is equally unaware of his/her personal identity. This loss of identity reflects "on the emptiness, isolation, loneliness, and despair experienced by the borderline personality,"<sup>17</sup> often expressed in the plays of Albee, Beckett, Ionesco, and Genet. The work of these playwrights describes to a great extent the type of mental illnesses observed in Western society since World War II,<sup>18</sup> which may be broadly defined as "'fear of close relationships', 'attendant feelings of helplessness, loss, and rage', 'fear of destructive impulses', and 'fixation to early omnipotence'."<sup>19</sup> In these plays, one is struck by the sparseness of stage and dialogue, the vague reference to time and place, a greater reliance on the subjective feelings of the characters, and the utter disregard

of any social or political setting. The characters are those of individuals who do not know who they are within a given period and a given society, but seek to know who they are outwith both time and space, i.e. they seek to identify a 'pure, and impassive' nature which would substantiate its 'immortality' through a narrow and self-centred dialogue with nature.

This pursuit of immortality, or at least, that of the will to recognise 'being' in a manner which defies both time and space, can be traced back to the Renaissance.<sup>20</sup> In his quest for self-knowledge, Montaigne, for instance, "looked for himself in the given experience of antiquity," for he solemnly believed that an individual was capable of "*self making in the knowledge of the other*."<sup>21</sup> In his library, Montaigne retreated from a reality which was threatening to him, and chose to recover a sense of authority, or valour and epic grandeur, through the history of Greece and Rome. In his seclusion, Montaigne's present was saved from its past captivity, it acknowledged itself as the present by evoking the past. The consciousness of what was brought to consciousness what is: it added to the conscience a new dimension; even more importantly, the restitution of the past brought about the hope of a different future.<sup>22</sup> It was in pursuit of this hope that Montaigne came to see his own image through the heroes of the past. His own worth, that of his subjectivity and his soul, soared as he walked in the footsteps of the great men of antiquity.

Thus, the Renaissance witnessed the first step taken toward the establishment of human ontology which defines itself in terms of a universal identity. In and through the sea of centuries of texts, the human spirit sought a universal essence which defies time and space, breaks away from the finiteness of theologically and scientifically defined human ontology, and embraced the infinity found in the cyclical form of time. This appears as a plausible form of self-positing that is capable of promoting a flight *from* the here-and-now. For Montaigne, the present, in its limiting and limited circumstances, accorded the individual little in terms of freedom. By contrast, when positing himself in terms that were independent of his space and time, he succeeded in extending to himself a type of freedom that, although not grounded in the reality of the here-and-now, was nevertheless present in a *different* space and a *deferred* time.<sup>23</sup> Freedom is therefore a possibility as *flight from* the present, and is also subjectivity as the capacity to create one's personal circumstances outside of the social and political environment. Seen in this light, twentieth century's playwrights' belief that reality is an illusion, and that the essence of life and human nature lie within the realm of the invisible and the remote, appears as a direct expression of this



belief in freedom as the *flight from* the limitations of the present.

The concept of *freedom as flight* refers back to the medieval Christian belief that life on earth is itself a prison of the soul, the release of which can only occur in the instance of death. Following the death of the body, the soul of the good will find a heavenly dwelling, and that of the sinful will dwell until eternity in a yet more terrifying prison, hell. In this sense, freedom is a *flight from* the present, not simply in terms of fleeing one's disagreeable circumstances, but also and more importantly, of a flight from the prison of the earthly body. Similarly, according to this medieval Christian view, subjectivity is not a state of being that is available to the individual on earth or in heaven because Subjectivity is the attribute of God, the only Subject, the ultimate Creator. Made in God's image, humans can simply imitate the act of creation, but may not be 'Subjects' as such. Human beings' means to be 'creators' are thereby limited to 'flights of imagination', and in later instances, the will to know God's designs, i.e. in and through knowledge (science and philosophy) of what God has created. Through this knowledge, reason appears as means to know God's ends. This understanding of subjectivity develops a bi-polar and un-bridgeable gulf between the finite and infinite, individuals and God. It appears as if one can only be the one or the other, but never both. Furthermore, any attempt to *become* the 'Other' implies a transgression<sup>24</sup> against nature and the order of things. In this case, however, the 'evolution' implied in the process of *becoming* cannot take place, for there appears to be no 'logical' means, or *medium*, which allows the transition from one state of being to the other. In their interpretation of the pagan Classics, the Humanists posited reason as a possible medium. In so far as it is a mental faculty, and hence separate from the physical plane, reason appeared as the only means that can establish the transition of the disembodied individual 'soul' to its flight toward the purity of the Holy 'Spirit'.

Unlike the teleological 'reason' of the Classics, the Humanists' reason is instrumental. In a world based on the belief that all human purpose is directed toward the achievement of freedom in the after-world, reason cannot be otherwise. This is because reason, or rational thought, cannot be an end in itself. According to the medieval Christians, no earthly achievement of freedom is possible. If reason is to help achieve any type of freedom, it should be in terms of its capacity to 'guide' individuals to 'know' what God 'intends', thereby making it easier for them to act according to His 'will' in order to secure their salvation. Ironically, this view of reason implies a certain type of freedom as self-determination, i.e. subjectivity, since

for the believer action-in-the-world would ultimately determine his/her future after death. However, this type of subjectivity, or freedom as self-determination, demands equally, and in the first instance, that the individual perish, and as such it is not a state of freedom that is actualisable in the here-and-now. Freedom as self-determination in the present must therefore take the shape of flight from the body, a 'temporary death', a state which indulges in dreams, flights of fancy, imagination and sexuality.<sup>25</sup> Montaigne in his flight from reality, for instance, was able to experience a freedom that he himself had created, that he imposed upon himself, and thereby acquired an identity.

This dissertation contends that this medieval Christian doctrine which posits freedom as wholly distinct and separate from subjectivity has radically influenced intellectual movements since the Renaissance, and hence shaped the struggle for freedom and self-determination exemplified in the social and political developments which have taken place since. It argues that both the Romantic movement and today's postmodern movement define freedom and subjectivity in these medieval Christian terms. Although postmodernism introduces, through the method of deconstruction and self-creation, new methods of obtaining freedom and self-determination, it nevertheless fails to de-construct the very notion of the type of freedom and subjectivity it seeks. Postmodernism argues that freedom can only be achieved through flight from the present, pointing to the failure of all other means to experience freedom in the here-and-now, but neglects to point out the nature of the freedom it acknowledges itself to be seeking. As individuals living in the present, the very moment which defines our existence, it behoves us to ask ourselves the question whether this is the type of freedom that we truly aspire to obtain, or whether we should be seeking to establish a social and a political system that is able to secure us a type of freedom that is equally self-determining in the present, in the actions we undertake in everyday life. Do we need to continue the struggle of past epochs blindly, never recognising whether it relates to our needs and aspirations, or should we not aspire to define the type of liberty we want to seek, establish it as a telos, and pursue it with enlightened minds and hearts? In this dissertation, I argue for the latter by seeking to propose an alternative definition of freedom, *freedom as subjectivity*.

The title of this dissertation, *Toward a Redefinition of Freedom and Subjectivity in Contemporary Society*, indicates a 'will' to 'redefine' both concepts, and to do so it introduces the concept of 'freedom as subjectivity' thereby blending both concepts into a united doctrine. This doctrine is based upon the premise that the

concepts of *freedom* and *subjectivity* have long been separated, or made bi-polar, specifically because they were originally defined in terms of Christian medieval thought which expressed human freedom in purely physical terms, and subjectivity in purely divine, metaphysical terms. 'Freedom *as* subjectivity' is a definition of freedom which goes beyond the pure physical realm extending to ethical concerns, but is equally the product of lived experience. It is the product of *activity*, not merely that of *the* efficient-cause (God), but also that of everyday individuals. It is the expression of a freely willed determination of the self, posited within a social and political context and telos. The present work takes Hegel's concept of the will as representative of this doctrine, and uses his work to counter those who define freedom in terms of 'freedom from'. It, therefore, pursues the definition of freedom and subjectivity from their inceptions in order to put into perspective the purpose and the content of today's 'apocalyptic' sentiment.

It is important to distinguish Hegel's concept of freedom of the will from what has been established since the Renaissance. We must, however, first introduce the three classes under which definitions of freedom are identified. First, there is the Hobbesian interpretation which defines freedom in terms of a physical state, freedom *from* as the absence of physical constraints and obstructions. A second definition of freedom is commonly known as the 'negative conception'<sup>26</sup> of freedom which is defined in terms of social, economic, legal or political restraints. It includes the study of the various restraints imposed by society and its institutions on its members, the measure of which indicates the 'degree' of freedom that these members enjoy. Finally, the third sense or usage of the term "freedom," implies "the quality of being free from the control of fate or necessity; the power of self-determination, attributed to the will."<sup>27</sup> It is this usage or connotation that is implied in Hegel's concept of the will (Part II, Ch. I), and what is often referred to here as the concept of 'freedom as subjectivity', i.e. 'freedom of the will *to* actual self-determination', rather than what is generally indicated in negative terms, expressed as 'freedom *from* restraint'.

It is important to note the debate which surrounds the understanding of the notion of the will. This debate occurs between libertarians and determinists and/or believers in strict theological predestination,<sup>28</sup> or more specifically between those who believe that the will is a mysterious 'contra-causal' force, and those who dispense with the concept of freedom altogether, or believe that it means only the personal and civil liberty requisite to the empowerment of choice and the consequent realisation of one's desires. Contrary to both viewpoints, what is meant here by

'freedom as subjectivity' does not see the will in terms of determinism, or scientifically ascertained 'causal-efficacy', both of which treat the idea of the will in purely physical terms. Rather, it sees that it is possible to articulate a doctrine of conditional, finite or 'quasi-causal' freedom which is compatible with the current understanding of causality in physics and biology, and which is sufficient to render intelligible a notion of moral responsibility in ethics.<sup>29</sup>

'Freedom as subjectivity' is conditional as it relies on the presence of certain elements affecting several levels of existence. On the social and political level, these include the nature and structure of the political system, rights and liberties and their practice. On the individual level, it includes individual consciousness and knowledge of the social and political conditions of society, as well as a particular individual's *will* to actively participate and *determine* his/her identity in society. 'Freedom as subjectivity' is not a function of 'human nature' as such, but is a quality of being as *becoming*, i.e. it is a state of being that implies the presence of an activity leading to a self-positing telos, in which case it is both the present and the *possibility* of the future. It is finite in so far as it depends on the activity itself (any form of physical or mental labour), and can vanish the moment that a condition (or conditions) impeding the active pursuit of self-determination asserts itself.<sup>30</sup> Freedom is 'quasi-causal' insofar as it is a perpetual dialectic between cause and effect. It is both an element capable of determining reality, and is itself dependent on a reality which determines it. Freedom as the will is not 'contra-causal' as it does not resist *the* efficient cause - God or Nature - but submits to it, and in this submission it *yields*. However, its yielding is not simply a giving-up of the self, a death, or complete self-negation, but is synthesis, transformation and evolution. Freedom is not a wrenching away from nature its right to the determination of reality, but is a *becoming* within the possibilities of nature. This *becoming* depends on the actualisation of individual will. This doctrine would establish that the freedom encountered at the level of human moral experience is *grounded on*, or *built up from* a more generalised phenomenon (such as environmental conditions or a given ideology) which is pervasive, and in some sense constitutive of social, political and physical reality.

'Freedom as subjectivity' seeks to break away from the medieval Christian definition of freedom as something distinct from subjectivity, by making it possible for individuals to become conscious of the value of, and their responsibility for, their actions, not only in terms benefitting atomistic, individualist existence, but, more particularly, in terms of the social and political responsibility of each individual living



within a free society. In breaking away from medieval Christian values, this type of freedom puts in line contemporary Western values with the kind of freedom that is both feasible and desirable in the present. If we are to maintain the belief that we are living in a 'disenchanted' world, and are ruled by reason, then it becomes incumbent upon us to recognise that we no longer need to compete with God for freedom and mastery, and that we are the rulers of our universe, responsible for its joys and sadness, health and illness, prosperity and poverty, honesty and corruption. The sooner we agree to acknowledge our role in the making of our world, the faster we can acknowledge the seriousness of our follies, and the irrationality of our choices. 'Freedom as subjectivity' is a concept which seeks to remind us that freedom is not a by-product of human existence, but an activity which carries a heavy moral responsibility, too great to handle as an individual atom, but perhaps far more manageable as a collective.

This dissertation is divided into three parts. Part I, 'Genesis of Subjectivity', consists of two chapters. Chapter I deals with freedom and subjectivity according to the Humanist tradition. It establishes the links between Renaissance Humanists' reading and interpretation of the Classics, and the type of freedom they sought. The chapter demonstrates that a two-fold definition of freedom was then pursued. The first was theo-centric which associated freedom as subjectivity with freedom *from* God, the Church and the Medieval community. As we shall see, this type of freedom accorded humanity a divine quality. The second, originally established according to the Aristotelean scientific tradition, became effective in grounding freedom in reality. Science was instrumental in establishing the divine and 'immortal' nature of humanity in the Renaissance as a perceivable reality. It is the convergence of the two that gave to the Classical Age both the inspiration and the power to develop political theories capable of bringing about the Age of Enlightenment and the French Revolution.

Chapter II of Part I deals with the Romantic movement which developed in the wake of the French Revolution, voicing the disillusionment of the predominantly German and English intellectuals with its results. The levelling hand of the ontological 'Declaration of the Rights of Man', left these intellectuals with the impression that the quality of the human spirit was usurped by the quantitative character of this declaration, for it seemed to have reduced that part of the soul that is divine to a quantitatively determined entity, thereby annihilating it. As the Humanists before them, the Romantics considered that a hierarchical order in nature did exist as an ideal and not as the result of a real evolution, implying that individuals were not

equal by nature, and that some may be more 'divine' than others. This was reflected in the Romantics' drive to produce the most divine work of art, and put forward the most spiritually inspiring scientific discoveries. This chapter presents the Romantic movement as having used the 'theory of knowledge' which was first developed by Baumgarten and elaborated on by Schiller in his *Essays on the Aesthetic Education of Man*. Schiller's account proved useful to the Romantics - if not representative of their age - as it developed a scientific theory of intuition bringing into harmony the knowledge of the spiritual and the physical.

Part II, 'Modernity: Theory and Practice', is divided into two chapters. Chapter I presents Hegel's objection to the Romantics' definition of freedom as subjectivity. He considered the Romantic revolt as a negative definition of freedom, which impeded the recognition of reason as the actualisation of social and political freedom, responsible for identifying subjectivity with pure negation and distinction, rather than with synthesis. Subjectivity for Hegel is the actualisation of freedom in the world (freedom as an exercise of individual free-will which brings into actuality a harmony between particular interests and the universal order). Hegel's critique of the Romantic movement's claim to divinity demonstrates that to attempt to define the world according to the two concepts of quality and quantity leads to an impasse. Of the rich and diverse work of Hegel's philosophy, two elements are presented in this chapter: first, Hegel's notion of teleology, developed in the *Science of Logic*, which establishes in clear terms how this negative dialectic may be overcome through synthesis; second, Hegel's concept of the free will as developed in the *Philosophy of Mind*. Finally, Hegel's attempt to ground his theory of freedom and synthetic dialectics is demonstrated in the *form* and *function* of the state in the *Philosophy of Right*.

The presentation of Hegel's position is paramount to this work, for he is critical of the negative dialectic of the Romantics, and, more importantly, his work has often been recognised (particularly by contemporary postmodernists) as a faithful example of the working of the Enlightenment 'project'. Criticisms, as we shall see for instance in Part III, levelled against the Enlightenment in the philosophical arena tend to be directed against Hegel's philosophy, using it as a clear example of why the project of freedom in modernity has failed. Chapter II of Part II seeks to establish that this is not the case; i.e., that Hegel's social and political philosophy, in spite of the similarities it may have had with what took place in modernity, had no contemporary expression, either in practice or in theory. For these reasons, this

chapter presents two sides to modernity. Max Weber's account of the workings of modern society is here examined as an accurate appraisal of the practical aspects of liberalism, or more specifically what truly went on. Weber's work represents a definition of an ideology concerning the actual working of the present. It deals with what is, rather than what ought to be. In terms of theory, Alasdair MacIntyre's critique of emotivism and the general character of contemporary society, represents the 'pro-Hegelian' side of thought in modernity. It exemplifies a direct critique of liberal society as defined and analysed by Weber. Yet, neither author presents an understanding and a critique of the present such as found in Hegel. Based on these analyses, criticisms of Hegel presented by the postmodernists appear as lacking in coherence and ground, and questions concerning the nature of and reasons for their critique demand answers, which are provided in Part III.

Part III, 'Postmodernism and Subjectivity: An Unfinished Project', seeks to identify and define the origins and elements which constitute postmodernism as an intellectual movement. It establishes links between Jean Paul Sartre's existentialism, his definition of human ontology and freedom, and the nature of the critique used by French postmodernists. Chapter I of Part III presents Sartre's philosophy, both in its earlier form in *Being and Nothingness*, and its later, more Marxist form in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. It is shown that Sartre's philosophy is essentially very critical of the type of dialectics used by Hegel and Marx; theirs is rejected on the basis that it is this type of dialectic, essential to the grounding of freedom in the present, that is most enslaving. For Sartre, freedom is that of thought and of the imagination, a type of freedom that can only be ethereal. In its purity, thought's only means to 'objectification' lies in the *word*, and not in any perishable form. Freedom for Sartre appears as the freedom to exist outwith reality and the physical realm. This is perhaps the reason Sartre established a dialectic that ends with negation rather than synthesis, and which he attempted to ground in terms of a theory of social and political consciousness defined along the same lines as the Marxist critique. This presentation shows that Sartre's attempt to establish this type of dialectic in the socio-political realm was a failure, a fact that was pointed out very clearly in Lévi-Strauss' critique of Sartre's existentialist Marxism.

Chapter II of Part III outlines the theory of freedom as subjectivity of three authors: Michel Foucault,<sup>31</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, and Jacques Derrida. Presented here are their theory of freedom, its relationship to authorship and language, and how this established relationship not only harks back to Sartre's dialectic of the

imagination, but more importantly, also reproduces the very definition of freedom implicit in the Humanist and the Romantics' project for liberty, i.e. freedom as subjectivity grounded in the individual's capacity to 'create', a process through which the individual is finally able to be conceived of as 'immortal'. Put also into question are the critiques these authors direct against Hegel and the Hegelian/Marxist dialectics. These critiques tend to reiterate Sartre's position, condemning Hegel's dialectic as 'idealistic', and Marx's as 'fetishistic', yet without entering into an adequate examination of either. Although aware of the limitations imposed on the individual in contemporary society, the postmodernists appear to continue to seek a type of freedom that is itself an escape from reality, steadfastly refusing to take into account a type of dialectic that seeks to ground freedom in the present. Rather, they opt for a type of freedom that, although it can exist unfettered, remains unrealisable.

The Conclusion points out the consequences of postmodernism, and argues that in maintaining a predominantly medieval Christian definition of freedom and subjectivity, postmodernists thwart the real struggle for freedom, and instead of presenting the already puzzled and bewildered contemporary individual with a viable alternative, they produce an alternative to freedom that is essentially anti-social, atomistic and ultimately violent. It is also pointed out that postmodernism presents a method of analysis that can be, and indeed has been, beneficial in unveiling injustices and inequalities plaguing contemporary society, and in virtue of being thus, postmodernism's critical approach can be harnessed to the benefit of society. However, as in all theories of liberation, moderation and vigilance in the application of the method and theory are necessary in order to avoid falling into the radical negativity found in all extremes. Furthermore, the conclusion gives as 'possible' example of an actualised 'freedom as subjectivity', in the here-and-now, the presently developing European Union. It briefly examines its structure, and the means by which it may become the type of social and political matrix which promotes the development of freedom as self-determination through its willingness and capacity to recognise and deal with conflicts of identity and difference.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Examples of this can be found in A. MacIntyre's *After Virtue* (Duckworth, 1985), also in main stream postmodernist literature, cf. Part III of this dissertation.

<sup>2</sup>Here I have in mind the work of phenomenologists, such as E. Husserl and M. Heidegger, but equally the work of members of the Frankfurt School, that of Existentialists, and at least some postmodernists among others in the fields of sociology, psychology, and artificial intelligence.

<sup>3</sup>Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, (London: ABACUS, 1980), pp. xv-xvi.

<sup>4</sup>Jean Baudrillard, *Le Transparence du mal, essai sur les phénomènes extrêmes*, (Paris: Galilée, 1990), p. 65. It is not the author's intention to portray the authors mentioned in this exposition of the 'state in contemporary society', i.e. Lasch, Bauman and Baudrillard, as representatives of the postmodern tradition. Rather, their work is taken here as a critique of contemporary society. Postmodernism, as a tradition, is dealt with in the discussion on Foucault, Lyotard and Derrida, in Part III, Chapter II of this work. Moreover, it is necessary to point out that Bauman and Baudrillard, although quite opposed to being qualified as postmodernists, are often referred to as such. However, what is certainly clear, is that they are both critical of modernism and postmodernism, and hence can readily be cited as critics in reference to both traditions.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Zygmunt Bauman, "The Sweet Scent of Decomposition," *Forget Baudrillard*, Chris Rojek & Bryan S. Turner (eds.), (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 22-46.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>11</sup>Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, trans. Iain H. Grant, (London: SAGE, 1993), p. 120.

<sup>12</sup>Bauman, *op. cit.* p. 31.

<sup>13</sup>Cf. discussion on postmodernism in Part III, chapter II in this study.

<sup>14</sup>Gary Hatfield, "Metaphysics and the New Science," *Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution*, David C. Lindberg & Robert S. Westman (eds.), (Cambridge U.P., 1990), pp. 93-166.

<sup>15</sup>Cf. G.F.W. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. Johnston and Struthers (London: Unwin, 1951), Vol. I. Section on Quantity.

<sup>16</sup>Lasch, *op.cit.*, p. xvi.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup>Explicitly discussed in Chapter II of Jean Baudrillard's *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, *op. cit.*

<sup>21</sup>A. Dupront, *Espace et humanisme*, (Droz: Bib. d'Humanisme et Renaissance, 1946), p. 15, my italics.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>23</sup>Cf. Part III, Chapter II, Section on Derrida's use of *différance*.

<sup>24</sup>It is interesting to note that both Foucault and Derrida sought to devise a "language of transgression," which meant to permit the expression of human freedom in the present. See Part III, Chapter II of this work.

<sup>25</sup>Sexuality is here indicated due to medieval characterisation of the orgasm as 'la petite morte', i.e. the 'little death', present in both the Moslem and Catholic traditions. Cf. George Bataille, *Hegel, la mort, and Visions of Excess*.

<sup>26</sup>Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty*, (Oxford U.P., 1969), pp. 131-38.

<sup>27</sup>Cf. "Freedom" in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. 4 (London: 1939).

<sup>28</sup>Pierre Laplace gave classic expression to the doctrine of determinism, especially in his *Essai philosophique sur les probabilités*, (Paris: 1814): viz., that all future states could, in principle, be calculated from a complete knowledge of present conditions. The libertarian position regarding contra-causal freedom is defended articulately by C. A. Campbell, who disputes Schlick's claim that



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Campbell, "Is 'free-will a Pseudo-Problem?" *Mind*, 60, no. 240, (October 1951), pp. 446-465.

<sup>29</sup>For a full discussion of possible gradations or varieties of determinism in science and metaphysics, cf. Errol E. Harris, *Foundations of Metaphysics in Science*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1965), Ch. 22; especially pp. 476-82. See also Henry Pierce Stapp, "Theory of Reality," *Foundations of Physics* 7, Nos. 5-6 (1977) 313-323.

<sup>30</sup>It is not necessary to give lengthy explanations here, it suffices to say, that changes disrupting the smooth functioning of the social and political conditions (war/revolution), or the physical/mental capacity of the individual (disease/accident) would certainly effect the extent to which freedom may be possible.

<sup>31</sup>Michel Foucault's work is difficult to place within any given tradition. His work belongs to the post-structuralist period, and has deeply influenced postmodernist authors such as Lyotard and Derrida and Baudrillard, but is itself not mainstream postmodernism. However, given the effect his method and preoccupation had on the postmodernist tradition, it was necessary to give a brief introduction of his work, more specifically that which allied him with Sartre's Marxist Existentialism during the late 60s and early 70s.

**Part I: Genesis of Modern  
Subjectivity**

"And when I came out of solitude and crossed over this bridge for the first time I did not trust my eyes and looked and looked again, and said at last, 'An ear! An ear as big as a man!' I looked still more closely - and indeed, underneath the ear something was moving, something pitifully small and wretched and slender. And, no doubt of it, the tremendous ear was attached to a small, thin stalk- but this stalk was a human being! If one used a magnifying glass one could even recognize a tiny envious face; also, that a bloated little soul was dangling from the stalk. The people, however, told me that this great ear was not only a human being, but a great one, a genius. But I never believed the people when they spoke of great men; and I maintained my belief that it was an inverse cripple who had too little of everything and too much of one thing."

When Zarathustra had spoken thus to the hunchback and to those whose mouthpiece and advocate the hunchback was, he turned to his disciples in profound dismay and said "Verily, my friends, I walk among men as among the fragments and limbs of men. This is what is terrible for my eyes, that I find man in ruins and scattered as over a battlefield or a butcherfield." ("On Redemption", *Thus Spake Zarathustra*)

Nietzsche's reflection on the crippled state of the Western subject rings a distinctly familiar note in the ears of contemporary socio-political critics. Twentieth century social and political thought has come to treat the question of subjectivity in terms of a disease which remains virtually incurable. Whether seeking to promote the exercise of a fuller notion of subjectivity,<sup>1</sup> or maintaining that subjectivity is an invention that has placed society at the risk of complete dissolution,<sup>2</sup> today's socio-political critics look upon the question of subjectivity with alarm and foreboding. Conferences on the subject leave one with the impression of having taken part in a medical consultation among experts all of whom define the disease in conflicting terms while proposing equally conflicting solutions. Given the fact that the symptoms of this socio-political 'disease' have been observed over a long period of time, it can therefore be concluded that the disease itself is tenacious, a quality that can be taken to be based on two likely causes. First, that not all the symptoms have been detected; and second, that the patient is not receptive to the cure. In view of Nietzsche's statement, it seems that in this particular case both causes are intertwined. In other words, that not only is the disease itself ill-defined, but also, and more surprisingly, the gross deformity, which constitutes the most glaring aspect of the disease, is hailed as a sign of genius.



Modern historical analyses regarding the rise of subjectivity take the age of Enlightenment as the period at which the disease took its toll on Western societies. It is in the writing of authors of this period, the historical events, and the tremendous changes which occurred in social and political thought, that they locate and identify the symptoms bringing the whole disease into being. However, must not one remember that the very origins of the disease do not necessarily lie in what manifests itself, but rather in what is hidden? Must not one ask the question of why have these symptoms been generated, as well as to the nature of the reasons underlying their growth. Indeed one must. Otherwise, whatever cure is administered, the results run the risk of either exacerbating the situation, or becoming completely ineffective.

Alarmed at hearing of disease and of symptoms, the questions crowd in our minds and answers as to the nature of this nameless socio-political disease must be given. For Horkheimer, the modern subject is suffering from a deep loss of self and of purpose.<sup>3</sup> For Marcuse, modern society in general and the individual in particular is suffering from "irrationality." Foucault sees modern individuals as aphasiac, suffering from a severe cerebral affection.<sup>4</sup> MacIntyre's modern individual is an emotivist<sup>5</sup> whose ethical judgments are based upon an arbitrary subjective decision rather than being socially founded. For Weber it is the mechanising hand of bureaucracy which takes away the original human identity, reducing it to a mere function, causing it to be "disenchanted." These are but a few of the names given to this disease. However, in so defining the dilemma of the contemporary individual, these authors appear to have based their critiques on Enlightenment rationality and its influence on socio-political organisation. Although the neglect of other symptoms does not, to any extent, discredit the work of the authors mentioned, it is the object of this Part to point to the presence of symptoms which were overlooked, i.e. the development of the essence of 'subjectivity' in Renaissance Humanism and in nineteenth century Romanticism. The neglect of the "stalk" (Humanism and Romanticism) to the benefit of the big "ear" (Enlightenment) occurs because the knowledge of the former's presence is taken as a given, the study of which will add nothing significant to the whole. In this case, the study of Renaissance Humanism and nineteenth century Romanticism are viewed as either preliminary<sup>6</sup> or subsequent<sup>7</sup> to the Enlightenment.

Even as a preliminary, the Renaissance could not be stripped of its glaring importance in the formation of modern subjectivity. It was indeed in the Renaissance

that humanity first awakened and came to regard itself as the centre of the universe, the beginning and end of all things. The Renaissance saw humanity emancipate itself from all previous relations of bondage. It attempted this liberation with regards to God, the community and the immediate world. To do so it escaped its reality and looked to the heavens, turned all its previous limits, even death, into infinite space in which its keen and curious mind could roam. The process of self-emancipation was based upon one of self-recognition. In the writings of Humanists (Platonist and Aristotelean) are presented the theories which gave rise to modernity's conception of the world, and its own place within it. Therein lies expression of the "ultimate" condition of human liberty as self-emancipation and expansion. Similarly, although the Romantic movement acquired much of its grounding of the definition of subjectivity in terms of 'creation' through the application of science and Enlightenment rationality, it nevertheless maintained the Humanist belief that humanity can only be free as long as it is capable of creation. Furthermore, to overlook the Renaissance as simply 'preliminary' to the great *event* makes the understanding of the Romantic period more problematic, for it neglects to specify the context within which subjectivity has come to be defined as creation. It is interesting to note that socio-political critics' disregard for the Humanist and Romantic periods may be associated with the fact that these movements were often considered 'literary' and 'artistic' rather than socio-political and philosophical.

This Part of this thesis contends that a closer study of Renaissance and Romantic definitions of subjectivity is crucial to the understanding of the signs of 'irrationality' manifested in modern society, thereby rendering them less 'irrational'. Modern and postmodern analyses of the crisis of reason, when neglecting the study of Renaissance and Romantic philosophy, define modern society in an arbitrary manner thereby undermining the validity of their arguments. An example of this is present in the work of Alasdair MacIntyre as well as many of the postmodernists. MacIntyre contends that the crisis of modern society is to be found in the Kantian theory of ethical self-determination, which he immediately identifies as the project of the Enlightenment;<sup>8</sup> the postmodernists, on the other hand, believe that Enlightenment reason has led to the eclipse of subjectivity.<sup>9</sup> MacIntyre believes that subjectivity is an Enlightenment invention, the presence of which has brought on the dissolution of socially expressible morality;<sup>10</sup> whereas the postmodernists claim that the Enlightenment has failed in providing the conditions necessary for the actualisation of subjectivity and freedom.<sup>11</sup>

This Part defines the origin and essence of liberty in the works of Renaissance Humanists and Romantics. In Chapter I, it presents the development of this theory of liberty in three spheres: Infinity (God/Church), Finitude, and Science, arguing that the Humanist project of liberty was incapable of becoming an actuality without facing its own self-annihilation. This occurred as Humanist philosophy became the fundamental ideology lending force to the growing influence and success of science. The latter provided a material proof of humanity's capacity to be *creator*, thereby endowing it with divine status on earth. It will also be argued that the unity which occurred between the Humanist project of liberty and scientific achievements, provided the Classical Age with a specific understanding of freedom, basing it upon the human capacity to actualise its superiority over all living matter through the application of science. It is upon this definition of freedom that the Enlightenment came to build its project of subjective self-determination.

Chapter II deals with the Romantic movement, defining it as a literary and generally artistic movement seeking to overcome the socio-politically levelling effects of the French Revolution through a return to Humanist ideals and Renaissance philosophy. It contends that all theories of 'creation', whether artistic, scientific or literary sought to re-introduce the idea that not all individuals are equal, as leaders of the French Revolution advocated, and that this inequality is not quantitative but qualitative; in other words, that individuals are distinguished from one another in terms of their capacity to 'create', a capacity which would elevate them to the position of being 'subject/creator', i.e. divine. Criticism of Romanticism will be the focus of Chapter I of Part II, mainly found in the work of G.W.F. Hegel who pointed out the impossibility of the achievement of such a definition of subjectivity, demonstrating that subjectivity does not necessarily imply 'creation', but is itself an *activity* which ultimately permits each individual, whether artist, scientist or other, to express a self-identity *in society*.

## **Chapter I: Humanism and the Definition of Subjectivity**

This chapter presents the process through which Humanism developed its definition of the project of liberty. It seeks to establish the presence of two roads taken toward the achievement of this freedom. The first is that of the Platonist and neo-Platonist philosophers, the second that of the Aristoteleans. It argues that freedom in the world made necessary the convergence of the two which resulted in a specific fusion between spirituality and matter. To this end, the chapter is divided in five sections. Section one establishes the break with the Church, a moment which brought about the first signs of the dissolution of community and the establishment of the presence of individualism. Section two describes the dilemma faced by Renaissance individuals, once separated from Church, who were forced to shoulder, for the first time, the responsibility for their actions in the world. Section three provides the philosophical elements that united the search for freedom in terms of the Humanist movement and the progress of science, a unity which found itself rooted in the need for Humanism to 'actualise' its project for freedom in-the-world. Section four asks questions concerning the legitimacy of science as means toward the founding of freedom as subjectivity (i.e. actualised freedom). Section five shows that in spite of its claim to value-neutrality, scientific progress aimed, nevertheless, to provide humanity with a grounding of its own capacity to self-determination. In conclusion, the question of whether contemporary philosophical claims against scientific rationality and reason are justified is asked, i.e. whether science itself has 'dehumanised' humanity, the answer to which, it is argued, is ultimately found in the nature of the Humanist project for freedom.

### ***Freedom From Church***

In the philosophy of Plato, Renaissance philosophers found a new way of thinking of humanity, society and the cosmos; all came to be defined in structural terms. Plato's metaphysics suited Christian thought insofar as it posited itself as transcendental in nature, based on the concept of the 'two worlds', the invisible 'real' world of perfect Forms and the imperfect, phenomenal world, a merely material and poor copy of the original. In the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* Plato, in the mystic pursuit of ideal beauty, developed an ethic which equated knowledge and virtue, "preached passive resistance to violence, selfish obedience to Reason, other-



worldliness and the active pursuit of the Good,"<sup>12</sup> the last two being formulated in the *Apology* and *Gorgias*. In the *Republic* and *Euthyphro*, Plato opposed the multiplicity of the Greek Gods and substituted for them the one God from the *Timaeus*<sup>13</sup> who unites the world of Forms and the inner human soul.

Plato's *Timaeus* celebrates the wisdom of humanity in the well proportioned individual. The well-balanced individual is in harmony with nature, and the circular movement of the perfectly spherical world is also present in the human mind. The four earthly elements (earth, air, fire, and water) are reflected in humanity's fluctuating humour. The well-proportioned individual is made of three faculties: Reason is lodged in the head, the spirited element sits in the heart and Appetite is in the belly.<sup>14</sup> Balanced humanity has Reason direct its spirit, which in turn controls the Appetite. In the *Republic* Plato demonstrates how these three elements are also lodged in the state, the body of which must be ruled as one would one's own. The rulers (or philosopher Kings), the warriors and the populace correspond and function in terms of the same descending hierarchy Plato identifies in the human body. Thought of in a larger context, the tripartite structure of the universe fits in easily with the Christian understanding of the order of Being where God, humans, the animals and inanimate world make up the descending hierarchy in terms of spiritual existence. It is in the *Republic* that Plato captured the Christian imagination and gave them a doctrine of Forms in which they found the possibility of attaining an understanding of God. For it is in this doctrine that the philosopher King, who is head of the hierarchy, appears capable of realising his purpose which demands the desire for knowledge of the whole truth and of reality; this finality can only be achieved in the knowledge of the essential Forms and not in the world of appearances.

The doctrine of Forms makes very clear the distinction between phenomena and Idea. Both elements belong to separate worlds; only the pure Idea is capable of shedding 'light' on the 'truth' underlying all phenomena. This distinction is seen by Martin Heidegger to have become muddled; both worlds have become indistinguishable due to the positing of the Idea in the Sun in Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*. For Heidegger, it is with the latter that began the degeneration of Western thought. This is due to the change that Plato effected and which appeared in the notion of 'truth' and true knowledge. With Plato 'God' has become a non-concealment, a truth that is palpable and hence knowable. The passage from the darkness to the light suggests that the *Idea* is a form of appearing (*Schein*).

"...Everything is concerned with the shining forth of that which appears and with the rendering possible of its visibility."<sup>15</sup> The four levels of non-concealment are distinguished "only to explain what makes accessible as such that which appears, visible that which manifests itself."<sup>16</sup> As the visibleness and appearing, the *Idea* becomes the coming-into-presence of *beings* (phenomena) as what they are. The *Idea* associated with the *Sun* and the *Light* loses its non-material, non-phenomenal essence and is reduced to the realm of *whatness*, the world of matter.

In *Heidegger and Renaissance Humanism*,<sup>17</sup> Ernesto Grassi sheds new light on the matter when pointing out the importance of language to the early Italian Humanists. They are shown to have been aware of this problem of interpretation.<sup>18</sup> Grassi argues that it was only after the incorporation of Platonism in Humanist thought, hence after the translation of Plato into Latin by Marsilio Ficino, that the Humanists developed a logical theory of metaphysics which brought reason to bear upon it as its principal element. In Grassi's view "Ficino's translation of Plato at the end of the fifteenth century and the speculative metaphysical Platonism and Neo-Platonism which it triggered led to a break with the Humanist approach to philosophy."<sup>19</sup>

The importance of Grassi's study lies in his presentation of the preoccupation of the Humanists with language and more importantly poetic language. Grassi points out that Humanism's approach to the study of humanity and the world is "not dealt with ... by means of a logical speculative confrontation with traditional metaphysics, but rather in terms of the analysis and interpretation of language, especially poetic language."<sup>20</sup> Comparing themselves with Homer whose poetry filled the function of history and philosophy, the Humanists attached themselves to poetic activity; its creativity provided an immediate view of situations in order to teach their meaning for the future of the community. The Humanists saw the Poets as "creators in the highest measure because of the directness of their language,"<sup>21</sup> and what they were capable of pointing out. The poetic language of the Humanists was "directed to an 'unhiddenness' in which an emperor, institutions, the future of a country and of a community"<sup>22</sup> appeared.

Grassi's argument points to two important issues. That the Humanists, long before Ficino translated Plato's work, were aware of the relation in language between "the word and object, between *verba* and *res*;" an awareness beside which "stands the

insight that *only in and through the word (Verbum)* does the "thing" (*res*) reveal its meaning."<sup>23</sup> This use of language, which Grassi defines as lacking in any "logical relationship between thing and thought or...logical truth,"<sup>24</sup> helps establish an understanding of how the Platonic *Idea* has come to be understood as a whatness, a perceivable 'Form'. Insofar as a word "reveals" the "thing," then the *Idea* must reveal a perceivable spirit; a *thingness* or *whatness* is, therefore, immediately associated with the *Idea*.

The second point is based on the equation Grassi makes between the poet and the philosopher. Grassi's association of the two is identical to the claim the Sophists and professional reciters of the Homeric poems present in the *Republic*. To this claim Plato answers that "if wisdom is to be gained only through knowledge of the real world of Forms disclosed by Dialectic, the claim that the poet can educate mankind to virtue must be as hollow as the pretence that the artist knows all about shoemaking because he can paint a life-like picture of a shoemaker."<sup>25</sup> In Homeric poetry, knowledge cannot be gained through the study of the portraits of heroic characters "any more than we can learn how to drive a chariot or conduct a campaign from his descriptions of a chariot-race..."<sup>26</sup> Plato's attack on the artists can be traced in the *Apology* where Socrates' examination of the poets shows them to work "not with conscious intelligence, but from inspiration, like seers and oracle-mongers who do not understand the meaning of the fine language they use."<sup>27</sup> Here Grassi's definition of the Humanist poet and his understanding of language fits remarkably well with Plato's definition of an artist. This resemblance shows that the Humanist poets were, in their thought and their understanding of humanity and the world, capable neither of proper interpretation of the Platonic doctrine of Forms nor of making the distinction between essence and existence. It also puts in question Heidegger's attack on Plato. One may contend that it was not Plato's *allegory of the cave* which made the direct association of the Spirit with matter, but more precisely it was the interpretation of the allegory by the Humanists which was responsible for such an association.

The Humanists' interpretation of Plato is significant insofar as it allowed them to escape liturgical control through the association of God with universal matter. By doing so they were capable of reappropriating all the facets in human life abandoned by the theologians. Both, the Renaissance thinker and the new bourgeois, were overwhelmed by their new responsibilities, and their accomplishment meant an affirmation of a new power. Humanity's new fortunate position demanded an

affirmation in the heart of the theory of Creation, a positing of the self in the universe in order to join God and attain perfect liberty. This self-positing took on, especially with the Platonic Humanists, a Godly status.<sup>28</sup> The Humanists' call for such a recognition is most poignantly stated by Marsilio Ficino, a statement which illustrates the intended 'misinterpretation' of Plato's philosophy:

Man forces himself to remain in the mouth of men for the entire future, (...) *He suffers from not having been honoured by the whole past, by all nations, by all the animals* (...). He measures the earth and the sky, scrutinises the depths of the Tartar, and the sky does not seem to him too high, nor does the centre of the earth too deep (...). And because he knew the order of the heavens and what moves these heavens and where they go, and their dimensions and their products, who can deny that he has almost the same genius as the author of the heavens, and that in a certain manner he can himself create them? Man does indeed not want a superior or an equal; he absolutely does not tolerate that there should be above him some empire of which he is excluded. This condition is that of God alone. Like God he forces himself to command everywhere. Like God he forces himself to be always.<sup>29</sup>

### *Freedom From Finitude*

Regardless of the number of heavens the Humanists were capable of reaching in poetry, their liberty from the Church was undermined by their own nature, i.e. humanity's original sin, with which it could never return to heaven. The realisation of this impediment made them shift their attention from the emancipation from the Church, to their own self-emancipation. According to Agnes Heller the awakening of humanity in the Renaissance consisted of a dynamic activity which held in its sway a plurality of human values. This resulted from a disintegration of the unity of the 'ideal man' into a '*concept* of man' and an '*ideal* of man'. The first was founded on the idea of depravity, the second on grace. The contradictions which ensued from this combination could not but promote a human activity which sought endlessly to acquire grace and shun depravity. To do so, Renaissance individuals emerged as seekers of their own private salvation; their methods of achievement were guided by a "philosophy...[which] came to derive all morally positive action from self-love (and altruism), from rational egoism, or from the categorical imperative."<sup>30</sup>



This shift presented a new type of self-emancipation: the transformation of the self. Regarding this possibility Giordano Bruno writes:

Let us put in order the heaven that intellectually lies within us (che intellettualmente è detro di noi) - and then that visible heaven that presents itself bodily to your eyes. Let us remove from the heaven of our mind the bear of roughness, the arrow of envy, the foal of levity, the dog of evil calumny, the bitch of flattery; let us ban the Hercules of violence, the lyre of conspiracy ... the Cepheus of hard heartedness. When we have thus cleansed our house and created our heaven anew, then, too, shall reign new constellations, new influences and powers and new destinies. Everything depends on this higher world, and out of contradictory causes must necessarily flow contradictory effects. Oh we happy ones, we truly blissful ones, if we only rightly cultivate our minds and our thoughts. If we want to change our condition, we change our habits; if we want the former to become good and better, the latter should not become worse. If we purify the drive within us, then it will not be hard to pass from this transformation in the inner world to the reformation of the sensible and outer world.<sup>31</sup>

There is a double side to Bruno's message. On the one hand, he is anxious to remind humanity of its own will and its power of transformation on two levels: spiritual and material. One can perceive a certain urgency in his message, an impatience to make humanity realise the power of transformation within itself - that it is not a static object, not an achieved and complete 'given', but a live, changing soul capable of self-transformation. On the other hand, there is also a message of warning: if this will to self-transformation is not put to use, is not recognised, is ultimately not applied or applicable, then change may not take place. Liberty has to come from within before any type of freedom in the world can be realised. Here, the world is seen as the mirror of the soul, a reflection of its nature.

Bruno's understanding of liberty developed in what Isaiah Berlin calls "the positive sense" of liberty. Berlin defines it as "the wish on the part of the individual to be his own master." Such an individual often wishes to be "the instrument of" his "own, not other men's, acts of will;" "to be a subject, not an object; to be moved by reasons, by conscious purposes"<sup>32</sup> which are his own and not by causes lying outside him. This is a liberty guided by reason; the free exercise of reason upon the self with the purpose of transforming it frees the individual. Freedom here consists in the transformation of the self, mentally, and, if necessary, even physically in order for the individual to be free, at any cost, from outside interference. Humanity overrides its

desires, passions, etc. through the application of reason in order to control and know its own self.

This doctrine is, of course, not Christian. In the eyes of the Church, individuals are born depraved and all personal choices are bad and sinful. The good choice is always what is made by God. Humanity is, in the philosophy of Saint Augustine, a prisoner of its earthly body, it can only be set free through its union with God which may only be achieved upon its death. The earth itself is a loathsome prison upon which only depravity can flourish. Wherefrom has liberty as self-transformation emerged? Although Bruno was writing after the Reformation, this tremendous event took action against the 'glorification of man' by reducing him even further. The answer to the question lies of course in antiquity.

The theory of liberty as self-knowledge was formulated by the early Platonists, one of whom is quoted as saying with astonishment "men have all the desire to lead the best life, they all know that life's sole organ is the soul..., nevertheless, they do not cultivate it (*animus suum non colunt*). And although who ever wants to have piercing eyesight must take care of his eyes whose function it is to see; if one wants to be quick in running, one must take care of the feet whose function it is to run ... This goes for all the bodily parts ... This all men see clearly and with no difficulty; also I have grown tired of asking myself with legitimate astonishment why do they not also perfect their soul with the help of reason (*cur non etiam animus suum ratione excolante*)."<sup>33</sup> For the Epicureans the principle of philosophy must be considered as the permanent exercise of the care for the self. The same principle is picked up by Seneca who states "just as a serene sky is not liable to a brighter clarity for, as it is continually being swept, it is endowed with splendour that nothing can sully; so is the man who watches over his body and soul (*hominis corpus animusque curantis*), and builds in the midst of one and the other the web of felicity, finds himself in a perfect state and of fulfilled desires, as long as his soul remains free of agitation and his body free of suffering."<sup>34</sup>

For Epictetus as for Aristotle before him, humanity is separated from animality through the power of its reason, a power which ought to be used in order to control and dispose of its other faculties. It is indeed the only power which is capable of undertaking its own 'self' as an object of study.<sup>35</sup> The perfection of one's soul through reason is a law which applies and is necessary to every individual. It is,

however, not a law imposed from without, but one which is applied from within. It is a morality which "demands again and always that the individual should subject the self to a certain 'art de vivre' defining the aesthetic and ethical criteria of existence;" this is no longer a social or communal law, but it is an art "which refers itself more and more to the universal principles of nature or of reason to which all should commit in the same manner, regardless of their status."<sup>36</sup>

The exercise of this type of liberty remained active in the Renaissance and could be traced to Montaigne who wrote close to two and a half centuries after Petrarca, father of Italian Humanism. Like the classical hermits who went into exile to discover God, Montaigne went into seclusion to find himself. But Montaigne's tower was also his library. Montaigne, as Dupront suggested, "looked for himself in the given experience of antiquity," for he solemnly believed that man was capable of "self making in the knowledge of the other." But further than that, what appeared in the Humanist tradition was the idea that Humanity was self generating, that "man was born of man, and the creation from another creation."<sup>37</sup> It was with the appearance of this notion that the Humanist deliberately broke ties with medieval Christian values, replacing them with the supreme value of the 'reborn man'. The call upon the past has here been used as an instrument to break the hold of traditions which congealed time. The present is saved from its past captivity, it acknowledges itself as the present by evoking the past. The consciousness of what was brings to consciousness what is; it adds a new dimension; even more importantly, the restitution of the consciousness of the past brings about the hope of a different future.<sup>38</sup> Renaissance 'selfhood' has come to see its own image reflected in the heroes of the past; its own worth rose as it sought to walk in the footsteps of the great figures in antiquity.

### *Actualisation of Freedom*

The discovery of the philosophy of antiquity prepared, and aided to a great extent, the development of the theoretical processes needed to emancipate the individual from Christian medieval traditions; however, how did this appear on the social and communal level? According to Gusdorf, "from Petrarca to Montaigne there developed a long investigation of man on man, which was in the same time a conquest of man by man."<sup>39</sup> This long investigation and conquest came into being as a result of the struggle which ensued from the dissolution of the *ideal* of man and its

effects on the nature of social interactions. Humanity's perfected 'self' was, of course, not identical to every other as theory would have it; the contradiction between the liberty of the 'one' expressed in the society of the 'many' entailed a long history of social struggle from Renaissance Italian Republics to modern democracies.

Medieval Christianity's demand that grace be the responsibility of the individual developed a shift from all that was communal to all that was private in the Renaissance. The stress on the dynamism of the individual was linked to the atrophy of social values, exaggerating the tension which existed between individuals and society. Custom was wholly separated from ethics, so that social ties were no longer based on a system of virtues, such as the Athenian virtues which were considered as a social duty, but were ethical elements which demanded far reaching individual decisions. Custom developed into a set of stereotypes which regulated conduct in all its details, creating tremendous tension between the possibility of freedom and the kind of freedom that really existed. Custom became a sum of social 'characters' that had no other function but to introduce the individual to a set of rules which were no longer defined by a traditional moral concept, but merely indicated the function of one's given role or character. Agnes Heller argues that as a result of the growing social and technical division of labour the stereotypes became numerous, while involving individuals less and less, and increasingly building up the personality in a variety of often contradictory stereotypes. To Heller, "people not only ceased to think of the content of demands which these stereotypes made, but also about the way they applied them. Custom because of its mechanical character always 'gives up' and becomes helpless in the face of new phenomena."<sup>40</sup>

This shift in responsibility from community to individual brought with it several changes in individuals' attitude toward society which took on various forms. In the field of ethics and social norms there developed a twofold split in tradition. On the one hand, there was an exaggerated emphasis on various ethical practices which demanded that their development be expressed into concrete systems of morals, which maintained values that were not objective, but very much partial, local and customary. These 'values' came under the influence of the members of the social strata who adopted those which corresponded to their various interests, exacerbating the tension already present on the socio-political level. On the other hand, there appeared a general human attitude bound up with certain abstract norms (fragments of abstract traditional values), where, unlike traditional prescriptive values defined by society,



individuals chose on the basis of certain positive ethical attitudes the right values by which to abide in their active life. As a result, the social norm developed into a unity of heterogeneous principles, the value content of which tended to be contradictory, acting as hindrance rather than achievement of a unified goal. Social custom was not considered as hindrance because "in and of itself it is *bad* or *wrong*, but because it has *become* bad, *become* wrong, for developing reality had pulled the carpet from under it."<sup>41</sup>

Renaissance society's traditional values crumbled in the face of the 'dynamic' activity of individuals, and its social modes of conduct were thrown into complete disorder. Traditional values such as 'courage' and the 'good' took on completely new and individualistic meaning. The traditional virtue of 'courage,' defined in Aristotelean ethics as a mode of social integration, came to be understood as "civil courage."<sup>42</sup> It defined the ability to hold one's own against 'social degeneration' by respecting and acting according to one's private principles. The 'good,' defined by Plato as the impalpable 'truth' and by Aristotle as the social 'end', became what is merely *possible*. According to Geronimo Cardano, the pursuit of ethical life does not take on a social telos, rather it finds its expression within the possibility of each individual. For Cardano: "I determined upon a course of life for myself, and in this my purpose was not single or constant ...; I acted as seemed advantageous when each occasion arose."<sup>43</sup> Cardano's doctrine implies that one may know what is good, but that one must act according to what is possible. Here the 'good' took on not only the limits of possibility, hence diminishing the need for constant striving toward a higher ethical achievement, but also indicated that the good is what one acknowledges as one's own and not that of the community as a whole. The customary demands of the community became external demands on individual 'ends', and did not necessarily coincide with the 'good' one has chosen. The unity of the ethical within the community dissolved into a plethora of "mutually contradictory systems of value and into a variety of interpretations of individual virtues, again often mutually contradictory."<sup>44</sup>

The dissolution of the communal fabric and the traditional code of ethics occurred as a shift from the community to the universe took place. The wider context within which the human soul came to find itself demanded in return a wider community to contain it. The universal soul became, with the coincidental discovery of the new world and of the route to India, the dweller of boundless and distant



shores. The great geographical and cosmological discoveries succeeded and no doubt followed the example of the discoveries made in the spiritual life. It was two centuries after Petrarca's ascent to Mount Ventoux in 1336 that Mercator sketched in 1539 his first map of the world.<sup>45</sup> Also, in 1543 appeared with striking coincidence Copernicus' *De Revolutionibus Orbium Caelestium* and Vesale's *De Corporis Humani Fabrica*;<sup>46</sup> these publications signified the beginning of modern inquiry on the universal and human bodies. However, this shift added to the tension already present in a 'self' that was in search of an identity, and whose *form*, although present, was not readily nor easily actualisable. The anatomy of the body acted, for a short period, as the provider of certainty about human nature, but left the soul to dwell in confusion and self-negation.

Contradictions seem to abound in the Humanist project. To begin with, liberty from God can only be achieved through an understanding of the absolute and the transcendence of the infinity posited in it. Nicholas Cusanus' theory of the finite and infinite places them theoretically on the same level of ontological reality, thereby reducing heaven to matter, rendering it perceivable and knowable. This relativity is dangerous when linked with the theory of liberty, for the finite is, here, theoretically capable of breaking away from its subordination to the infinite. The latter, although reduced to the former, remains to dwell in the realm of the absolute. A curious position is generated: the infinite is reduced to knowledgable and perceivable finitude, and the finite is elevated to the level of the absolute by its very knowledge of infinity. Needless to say, the liberty of the finite from the infinite through the knowledge of the latter can only be an illusion: the finite can never join the infinite, body cannot become spirit unless its very being is altered; i.e. if the finite be no more, hence, if humanity is essentially dehumanised.

The unification of human nature with the Christian God entails one more element, the power of knowledge, or reason. As the infinite is reduced to the finite universal, God is seen as the great "watchmaker" whose genius can be duplicated through the knowledge of how the "watch" works. As soon as humanity is capable of understanding the "mechanics" of nature, it is able to become the perfect replacement of God on earth. Reason is seen here as the human faculty capable of grasping the universe with all its mysteries and reducing it to knowable, controllable matter. Through reason it outshines all other living matter, and because of it, is capable of mounting upon the universal throne. However, this is a reason which seeks

individual liberty, and cannot through this telos join the universal.

Liberty as self-knowledge and self-transformation encounters problems on a different level. The emancipation from the traditionally set code of ethics and the development of the Stoic doctrine of the culturing of the self proves to be problematic on several counts. The purpose of the reflection of the self for the Stoics is that of self control, self-purification and rational command over irrational forces of the passions. Renaissance humanity adopted the method to attain a spiritual existence which surpasses matter and joins with the universal. Its purpose is that of self-evasion, a flight from the body to join an already reified spirit. The problem, however, becomes exacerbated as the social unity of the community is unravelled. In this context, the cultivation of the self serves no social purpose, no outside end but that of self-glorification. For the Epicureans and the Stoics the cultivation of the self took on a social, as well as a personal function. For Marcus Aurilius, the practice of peering into his soul is made for the purpose of understanding the soul of the humblest individual through the action of depriving himself of food and drink; such an understanding is meant to show the ruler the road to wisdom and to justice. Renaissance humanity's purpose of self-cultivation does not concern itself with the affairs of the community; rather, like Montaigne in his library, the cultivated seeks self-knowledge insofar as it permits the identification of Godly qualities within the human soul. The affairs of the community must be resolved according to precepts of reason which are universal, and hence, identical in every individual. In this context, the community becomes, like the universe, the circle which revolves around the point.

This type of liberty is what we have inherited and what Isaiah Berlin considers as impossible to achieve. For Berlin, to define liberty according to the precept of a "subjective reason" is to run the risk of achieving the opposite: either an internal or an external form of despotism. Internally, the subject is able to convince itself that it is free by teaching itself not to desire what it cannot in reality achieve. Externally, states Berlin, "if a tyrant (or hidden persuader) manages to condition his subjects (or customers) into losing their original wishes and embrace (internalize) the form of life he has invented for them, he will, on this definition, have succeeded in liberating them. He will, no doubt, have made them feel free-as Epictetus feels freer than his master (and the proverbial good man is said to feel happy on the rack)."<sup>47</sup> But, Berlin observes, "what he (the tyrant) has created is the very antithesis of political freedom."<sup>48</sup> Berlin joins Hegel in recognising that as long as the action undertaken by

the individual does not ensue from the individual's conscious determination to act according to an understanding of the Form in which the subjective will is the particular, then the individual cannot be considered as expressing free agency.

Berlin is pointing out a problem which was already prominent in antiquity: the distinction made by Plato in *Gorgias* between *virtue* and *Techné*. Plato's distinction was directed against the Sophists who claimed that the individual who possessed virtue was necessarily the one who succeeded in public life. For Protagoras, in order to acquire *virtue* or success, one should learn *Techné*, the craft, or skill of public oration in order to mould one's hearers successfully. Hence, for the Sophists virtue was not the possession of wisdom, justice, courage and temperance, but the capacity, the oral skill to effect a favourable response from the hearers. Moreover, virtue itself is not associated with the human qualities of virtue, but merely with the degree of success amassed in society. Similarly, the Renaissance theory of liberty aimed to acquire for the individual the noble and magnanimous capacity of God through its skill; its capacity to effect a favourable reaction from nature (through the knowledge of its laws) allowed it to raise its own worth in the eyes of humanity to heavenly heights.

The Sophists' relativism has its equivalent in the theory of perception which guides the Renaissance understanding of reason, and hence an individual's possibility to acquire liberty. The 'truth', the *Idea*, the works of God, as well as God Himself have all become perceivable and knowable through reason. Reason is, therefore, relativist; what is "rational" for me is what I have seen as being the works of God, and hence it is the only truth and must therefore become universal. To convince you, the public, of this truth, I must use all my skill to demonstrate the revelation I have received from God and it must be perceivable. It is small wonder that magic, astrology, and mythology were highly appreciated and believed in the Renaissance;<sup>49</sup> science proved to be the most efficient *Techné* of all.

Berlin pronounces the impossibility of an achievement of a liberty based upon a 'positive' conception because the premise upon which it bases this liberty does not and cannot hold as "liberty in the world." Self-transformation according to the precepts of reason can only hold when reason itself is a moral, social and political practice, i.e. based in the world and invariable. Therefore, reason, to be the representative of any type of liberty, must be social in character; for in its relativist

state it will force the many to seek 'self-transformation' in order to adapt to what the few find as "rational" and "universal." It becomes the duty of the many to repress any signs of "irrationality" by moulding their 'self' to the precepts of applied 'reason'. A multitude of questions are bound to be raised at this point. First and foremost, in view of the hopelessness of Humanism's actualisation of this liberty, how has the concept of universal reason succeeded in remaining operative in the present day? In other words, if the concept of reason is indeed "relativist" and not "universal", why has it survived to the present day? And consequently, how can one pretend to call Humanist project of liberty a failure? These are the questions addressed in the following.

### *Freedom or Servitude? Science's Victory over Philosophy*

Cries against the 'destructive ' power of science range from purely metaphysical concerns, such as the complaints put forward by Heidegger, to socio-political issues such as those concerning its "dehumanising" effects.<sup>50</sup> The major problem for which science has been held responsible is clearly stated by Alexandre Koyré:

Yet there is something for which Newton -or better to say not Newton alone, but modern science in general- can still be made responsible: it is the splitting of our world in two. I have been saying that modern science broke down the barriers that separated the heavens and the earth, and that it united and unified the universe. And that is true. But, as I have said, too, it did this by substituting for our world of quality and sense perception, the world in which we live, and love, and die, another world - the world of quantity, of reified geometry, a world in which, though there is place for everything, there is no place for man. Thus the world of science -the real world became estranged and utterly divorced from the world of life, which science has been unable to explain- not even to explain away by calling it "subjective".

True, these worlds are everyday -and even more and more- connected by the *praxis*. Yet for *theory* they are divided by an abyss.

Two worlds: this means two truths. Or no truth at all.

This is the tragedy of the modern mind which "solved the riddle of the universe," but only to replace it by another riddle: the riddle of itself.<sup>51</sup>



Koyré's comment reveals the distinction between quality and quantity and assigns them to two worlds, two truths. It holds science responsible for the domination of one world over the other, and distinguishes between theory and practice. However, it does not specify how the unity of these distinctions has come about, i.e. how they fit together, and how they have come to alienate one from one's self? Moreover, it does not define the nature of these two worlds, nor how they have come to be separated? If modern science is responsible for their creation what unity have they had? To answer these questions one must first answer the following: if modern science is, as Arnold Brecht proposes,<sup>52</sup> value-free then how has it succeeded in the destruction of the harmony of Koyré's unified world by reducing it to two opposing worlds? What is being put in question here is not simply the nature of the effect science has had on the world, but how and why science has come to develop such a polarised world.

Modern evaluations of the problems of dehumanisation and human alienation from the world find in science the immediate culprit, and are happy to deploy all their metaphysical arguments to demonstrate the pitiful state to which modern consciousness has been reduced. These evaluations make grand statements in discussing modern problems, but give, despite their own efforts, signs of despondency.<sup>53</sup> Through their analyses they often arrive at the conclusion that, given the value-free status of science, the modern use of science as a finality in and for itself appears irrational. This irrationality is deduced from a comparison between Greek teleology and modern reason. Modern reason, scientific and value-free, appears as a pure instrument for an undefined purpose. It is my intention to demonstrate that science, contrary to the modern popular view, is indeed in possession of a value, a finality which is none other than the Humanists' project of liberty.

This, of course, is an ambitious project. However, having already provided a definition of the nature of the Humanists' theory of liberty, this section will point out the inter-relatedness of the philosophical elements, both Classical and Medieval, which permitted the fusion between the Humanist theory of liberty and Science. The following will first outline the elements found in Classical Greek philosophy, both Platonist and Aristotelean, which found their way into Medieval theology and its view of the world, and second, it will illustrate how these elements became manifestly the basis upon which Renaissance theory of liberty was established.



The discussion of the emancipation of Renaissance consciousness from God presented Plato's philosophy as the medium of this process, but neglected to make explicit the relationship which existed between Greek philosophy and the concerns of the Medieval Christians. Unlike the contention held by Grassi, Platonic and Aristotelean philosophy entered into Christian theology much earlier than Ficino's translation of Plato (although this marked the height in the formulation of the Humanist project) through the commentaries of Muslim and Jewish philosophers.<sup>54</sup> This is clear, since it is found in Petrarca's writings severe criticism of the interpretations the Muslim philosophers made of Aristotelean philosophy.<sup>55</sup> It is therefore necessary that a study of how Christian theology adopted the Classics be presented, if only schematically, in order to shed light on the elements connecting Humanist thought (Platonist and Neo-Platonist) and scientific thought (mainly Aristotelean, but containing traces of Platonism).

In the *Timaeus* Plato introduced the myth of the creation of the world. There, he explained how the highest God after having mixed in a crater the two elements to form the earth, the same and the other -hence the ideal unchanging and the phenomenal transient- came to shape the soul of the world. Both elements of the world revolved in circular and elliptical fashion, thereby defining it. All other gods, whether celestial or earthly, were placed in a hierarchical fashion with the Ideal as supreme, the Spirit and the Appetite followed in a descending order. The phenomenal world of matter was separated from the Ideal world, and was also lower in status. The *Timaeus* had tremendous success in the Middle Ages, inspiring a variety of literary and scholarly works. Its attractiveness resided mainly in its idea of creation, upon the concept of the 'two worlds', and especially upon the idea of a unique God, a perfect God, a generous and kind God. In the *Timaeus*, the idea of a God-creator acquired more strength and further conviction. The world appeared as God's own creation for eternity.

Platonism and Neo-Platonism exercised a naturally attractive force on religious thought. Both in the Islamic and Christian traditions, Plato's philosophy accentuated in them the idea of a mystical soul which lay at the source of creation and which announced a transcendental *Good*. The One was seen as the transcendence of Being and of Thought of the Greek philosophers. Plotinus, who was often mistaken for Plato, held the same beliefs as did St. Augustine. In the *Confessions* St. Augustine admitted his indebtedness to Platonic thought for it was with the help of Plato that his

confused and anguished soul found peace when he saw in the *Timaeus* the unity of God; he consequently renounced his belief in the existence of a God of Good and a God of Evil. The Good of the soul, the eternal Good were all the product of the one God.

The 'soul' became a common denominator between Platonic thought and religious beliefs. The medieval Platonist was overwhelmed by the actual acknowledgement of the soul, "by the fact of *being* a soul."<sup>56</sup> This acknowledgment spurred on a will to further one's knowledge of it, of one's self; a knowledge in which the individual found the greatest satisfaction. Just as the soul was at the heart of the world holding its truth, humanity found the soul in its heart to contain its truth, its essence. Also, as the soul of the world, the human soul was the most precious and the highest in value of all other attributes. St. Augustine recommended a return to the self in order to find God, and find eternal happiness. The 'truth' lodged in the soul was the 'truth' of God, it was the revelation of God to us and through us. The truth of God was God himself who lived in the soul, and who was closer to us than we were, or ever will be, to ourselves. *Deum et animama scire cupio*; for St. Augustine, to know God was to know one's soul, for the knowledge of the one implied the knowledge of the other. The human soul was, therefore, the mirror upon which the image of God was reflected.

However, as in the 'two worlds' of Plato, the soul, the world of *ideas* was wholly and completely separated from the body, and could never be united with the phenomenal real. The soul could guide the body, but was completely independent of it. Humanity was essentially a mortal body within which a soul was imprisoned. It was not considered as capable of thought, only the soul was. In spite of this limitation, the Renaissance theory of liberty did not abandon its purpose, but found a way in which the actualisation of finite humanity with the universal infinity of God (i.e. the social expression of God through the eternal soul of the individual) became literary, and was expressed in all creative arts: in works such as in philosophy and poetry, and sensually in painting, music and sculpture. Through this medium God was forever present, forever kindly and good. Humanism's failure consisted in its incapacity to release the 'un-inspired' and 'un-artistic' humanity from the drudgery of everyday life, one which was successfully accomplished by the institution of the Church. On its own, it remained imprisoned in the mould of a spiritual revolt; its capacity to reform its socio-political life-world was limited to a small sphere.

Humanity's independence from the Church had to become an actuality, a lived experience, an expression of its free subjective will through the 'material other'. This form of Humanist revolt needed the accompaniment of an instrumental reason capable of transforming the 'world', proving once and for all humanity's privileged status, its independence and worth.

If Plato attracted to a great extent the theological spirit of the age, Aristotle did not, until he was 'Christianised' by St. Thomas Aquinas. Aristotle could not attract the theologians simply because his work did not seek the *Ideal*, but concentrated on the real, the tangible. His was scientific knowledge based upon close study of the physical world. The latter, for the Aristotelean of the Middle Ages, represented the solidification, the example, the nature of the work of God. Within its folds lay hidden the secrets of creation, through which the nature of God could be revealed. The world was seen as a gift from God; once received, it was appropriated and was not to be wrenched away.<sup>57</sup> Unlike the Platonists who turned to their 'souls' to find God, the Aristoteleans found the nature manifested in His work as the great miracle of creation, the knowledge of which brought them closer to the 'truth' of creation. Humanity itself could only discover the soul through contortions of reasoning. Hence, the knowledge of the spirit was not readily perceivable, rather it could only become a non-concealment through the employment of reason, as well as through the study of physical nature in which the spirit might reveal itself. The preoccupation with the material was also present in humanity's definition of its nature. For the Aristotelean, one was not a soul imprisoned within a mortal body but, above all else, an individual - a rational and mortal animal. Aristotle was severely critical of Plato's separation of body and soul because this conception implied the fracturing of the unity of the individual. For Aristotle, and those who followed him, an individual was not a strange and superior being, but an animal, a part of nature albeit, one who possessed a nature that was placed high in the hierarchy of the world.<sup>58</sup>

Aristoteleans believe that being-in-the-world and the unity of the individual are primordial. Every act is an expression of this unity. Action-in-the-world is a form of acknowledgement of the world and a step toward its understanding. Aristotle's preoccupation with the unity of the physical world and human nature is fully demonstrated in the ensemble of his work which covered subjects ranging from physics and natural sciences to psychology, ethics and metaphysics. There, knowledge and thought are the product of the unity of the soul with the material.<sup>59</sup>

Knowledge starts necessarily from the perception the individual has of the world, perception which can only come from what the senses reveal to us: in the first instance, the content of our thought. Perception is the first but primary step in the process of thinking and knowing. This is merely the first step, for it is up to individuals to elaborate on sensation. Humanity's power of abstraction, memory and imagination allows it to go beyond this first step, thereby obtaining scientific knowledge. In spite of abstraction and pure thought's capacity to take it away from matter, the relation between the latter and the soul remains primordial (*Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu...*). For Aristotle, the Ideas, the spiritual Forms remain alien to the direct knowledge of the human mind and can only be conceived of through "abstract reasoning."<sup>60</sup> This concealment applies to all spiritual bodies including the human soul.

An important step in the understanding of the world is found in Aristotle's law of causality. God, the human soul, and the understanding of all natural phenomena reside in primary causes. The understanding of God is, therefore, that of the primary cause for existence of whom all else is now independent.<sup>61</sup> The human body, the soul, and the physical world can be known and explained through reasoning. Perceptions of the physical world depend on a definite primary cause, which is itself not caused but given. Also, for every cause there is a finality, an end in and for itself. The primary cause is the generator that puts in motion a series of effects guided towards a given end. Each primary element contains its own end within it; just as lies in the seed the potential to grow a flower which constitutes its end, lies within the social individual the potential to become a virtuous political animal.

In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle fractured the unity of human nature by raising the value of thought to a higher spectrum.<sup>62</sup> This was interpreted by St. Thomas Aquinas as the idea that if thought came from "outside" it was given by God.<sup>63</sup> God created in us an intellectual agent which is superior to all animals, which constituted us as 'spiritual agents'. Hence, our self-consciousness, metaphysical knowledge and spirituality explain the separation between body and soul.<sup>64</sup> What Aquinas took for granted was that there was a God of creation, whereas "the God of Aristotle (...), this God, whose thought was only of himself, and who was unaware of a world he did not create, was incapable of playing the role assigned to him by St. Thomas. The Thomist solution presupposed a God creator and a created world. Because it is only in this world, ... the *spiritual* individuality, that the human *personality* is possible.



This was not the Aristotelean Cosmos."<sup>65</sup> Indeed, for Aristotle, the world as physical nature transcended and founded being, but was neither created nor did it depend on a creator. Like Plato, the virtues of the soul were distinctly socially teleological. However, unlike Plato, they were not bound by any *Idea*, the attainment of which was not present in the world, but resided in the capacity of each individual to act according to the best of his/her potential. In this respect, the Platonist world of Forms, of the perfect mathematical and geometric Ideas appeared in sharp contrast to the Aristotelean world of matter, the spirituality of which came first and foremost from the physical world to which it necessarily belonged.

### *Reappropriation of Matter by Spirit*

Due to the development of the Platonist and Aristotelean traditions in the Middle Ages, the Renaissance found humanity's relationship to nature paradoxical. On the one hand, Aristotelean philosophers/scientists, such as Paracelsus and Cardano held that humanity was identical to nature but was reproduced on a smaller scale; humanity was therefore incapable of learning about itself without learning and understanding nature. On the other hand, Renaissance Humanist (Neo-Platonist) philosophy drew a sharp distinction between subject and object, where nature was just that object. Pico Della Mirandola, Giordano Bruno, Carlous Bovillus and others held that freedom and its fullest expression could only be attained when one arrived at what Pico called "the power of Reason," that of "reflexive knowledge," knowledge of the self. According to Pico:

it is not being that prescribes once and for all the lasting direction which the mode of action will take; rather the original direction of action determines and places being. The being of man follows from his doing; and his doing is not only limited to the energy of his will, but rather encompasses the whole of his creative powers. For all true creativity implies more than mere action upon the world. It presupposes that the actor distinguishes himself from that which is acted upon, i.e. that the subject consciously stands opposed to the object.<sup>66</sup>

Here the Socratic virtue of "know thyself" is present, only it has a different purpose. It is seen as the truth that allows the one who grasps it the mastery, not only of material nature, but also, and most importantly, of one's destiny. Human liberation can only come from the truth found within; the realisation of subjectivity is therefore



paramount.

This paradoxical relationship gave rise to the development of a dialectical view of human nature which in turn gave rise to the appearance of a dialectical expression of freedom. For the Aristoteleans, it brought an identification of humanity and its intellectual capacities with a material world that could never be reflective, but could only inspire reflection. Paracelsus' argument claiming that one could learn nothing from one's self, and that this knowledge emerged from one's immediate surroundings which provide experience, could only emphasise a belief in the vacuity of the individual 'self', and a total identification of human capacities with the material. Kepler, also in his theory concerning the reflection of humanity in nature, claimed that it was but a reflection of the macrocosm (nature) on the microcosm (individual).<sup>67</sup> The Humanist tradition, while keeping in common the same elements (individual, nature) and a similar theory (microcosm, macrocosm) with the first, perceived humanity's relationship with nature as not of equality but of superiority. For Bovillus, the microcosm is the reproduction in thought of the macrocosm, the structure of the two systems is the same, but while the macrocosm is substantial, the microcosm is the intellectual mirror of that substantiality. Bovillus states that "the world has a maximum of substance and a minimum of knowledge. Man has the minimum of substance, but a maximum of knowledge."<sup>68</sup>

The significance of these bipolar conceptions lies in their definition of human nature as such. The Renaissance did not merely celebrate the 'birth' of the individual, but helped in qualifying and defining human nature and its 'end'. The Aristoteleans identified human nature with the material objective world; they studied it through the eyes of scientists qualifying it as a biological entity whose spirit is identical to nature which Kepler deemed as "mechanically structured." With nature regarded as the "divine watchworks," its identification gave rise to the assumption that even its rationality was also 'mechanical'. Humanity in this tradition was reduced to a mere natural phenomenon whose being could be known through little more than mechanically applied scientific observation. Its end was also identified with that of nature: namely, that of continuous regeneration. Here, a teleology of being does not lie in *reason*, as the original Aristotelean theory would have it. Renaissance scientists broke away from Aristotelean social teleology specifically because the type of reason which they used had a limited material end, and did not delve into socio-political matters. After Christianity, which placed human teleology in the after-world and the

day of judgement, reason can only be conceived of as instrumental. For the Christian scientist, reason had become mechanical, incapable of finality; it could only be used toward an 'end' which lay outside it. On its own, separated from the Humanist project of freedom, scientific reason seemed devoid of any spiritual content; it represented practice without theory, an instrument the practical uses of which were not known, and was thereby deemed 'useless'.

The Humanist tradition, contrary to the Aristotelean, insisted on making the distinction between humanity and nature. Not merely content with the distinction made between humanity as 'subject' and the material world as 'object', it extended it to claim that human actualisation as subjecthood through action could not materialise before the individual was made aware of this very distinction.<sup>69</sup> Human nature was seen as departing from its essential being, which it shared with nature as part of its reality, through the four steps which Bovillus called "*esse, vivere, sentire, intelligere*,"<sup>70</sup> the last being the accomplishment of 'reflexive knowledge', or self-consciousness. In this tradition, the individual was a being filled with potentialities, whose ultimate 'end' consisted in the realisation of self-knowledge, through which the knowledge of the cosmos may be obtained.

"Reason" in this tradition, "is the power in man by which 'mother nature' returns to herself;" it is hence the "passage from the 'object' to the 'subject', from simple 'being' to 'consciousness of self'."<sup>71</sup> 'Reason' is posited as an 'end'; however, this teleology of 'reason' is no longer that of the Greek polis which is social, rather, 'reason' is an 'end' that is 'universal'. The universe represents the unity of nature and of humanity. Humanity no longer appears in nature as a mere part of the universe, "but as its eye and mirror;" and, indeed, states Bovillus, "as a mirror that does not receive the images of things from outside but that rather forms and shapes them in itself."<sup>72</sup> It can do so because it is the intelligent expression in nature. Only humanity can grasp nature's totality in its 'principle' thereby rendering it the very consciousness wherein nature finds its most eloquent intellectual articulation.

The dynamic nature of *Renaissance humanity* gave rise to a dynamic concept of freedom. Although both definitions combine to call for an essential universal equality of humanity, they define and achieve it differently. In the purely scientific tradition equality was based on the physical criteria considered as given. Humanity was seen to be equal in its 'natural constitution' as a living biological being. It was

thus identified as another expression of a mechanically conceived natural phenomenon. The Platonists saw it as a subject whose 'divine' nature surpassed phenomenal nature in its superior intellectual potentialities. Its force resided in its capacity for 'self-consciousness'; a consciousness of its subjectivity in nature. Equality lay in the *potential*, the development of which was left up to the consciousness of the individual of subjective possibilities; such an individual may, as Pico so eloquently stated, "degenerate to animality or be reborn towards divinity." Moreover, unlike the scientific definition, human teleology was not realised in mere matter, for it was worthy of higher achievement: that of the development of the superiority of its intellect. Matter could not have been that toward which humanity aimed, for it lay beneath humanity in value. This was stated by Pico in his criticism of astrology where he suggested that subjective universal freedom existed when the determination of human will was the result of its own mind and not effected by any cosmic influence. According to Pico, as stated by Cassirer:

To accept astrology means to invert not so much the order of being as the order of value--it means making of 'matter' the master of spirit.<sup>73</sup>

This view of astrology emphasises Pico's rejection of the expression of subjectivity through the material sphere. It appears even more significant when taking into account the popular view of astrology in Renaissance thought. Astrology imparted a 'spiritual' character to the stars, and to the effect their movements have on the constitution and behaviour of each individual, rendering their activity, their effect on earth and its inhabitants, an act of God, a spiritual rather than a material effect. Pico's purpose in his rejection of astrology was twofold. He sought to free the concept of God from its status as the eternal dweller of the cosmos, elevating it to the realm of impalpable spirit, thereby reducing the stars to their substantial being while leaving humanity to shoulder the responsibility for its own development, and actions. Pico maintained that human potentiality develops through its own will and not through the expression of the material object upon it. Through the consciousness of its 'worth' and 'dignity', humanity should be able to impress its will upon the natural, and contrary to the Hobbesian individual, its will is innate and superior to the power of attraction of matter in nature.

Furthermore, in this distinction between 'matter' and 'value' there lies the germ of the essential conflict between Quality and Quantity as the parameter

underlying the essence of equality. Pico speaks of value, for in *Oration on the Dignity of Man* he specifically makes the distinction between three stages at which humanity would find itself, viz. vegetative, animalistic or divine, and joins Bruno in commenting that it is up to the individual to place the quality of the soul in one of these stages through the will to exercise the power of reason, the perfection of which places one with the divine. This distinction is of paramount importance since it provides the elementary definition of three classes, viz. the common people, the commercial class, and the intellectual class, which attempt to reflect the three types of 'soul' present in Plato's *Republic*.

Both traditions, Platonist and Aristotelean, underwent tremendous changes toward the end of the sixteenth century when a great spiritual revolution took place. These may be summarised<sup>74</sup> under two major movements. First, there was the dismantling of the cosmos, i.e., that of its hierarchical and finite Form, and, consequently, there was the disappearance of all values connected to this system from scientific thought. Second, there appeared the "geometrisation" of space. The old hierarchical system of values, dividing the world in two, was replaced by the Euclidean theory of infinite space, one which was homogeneous and abstract. It seemed as if in one sweep of the Galilean wand science and spirit came under the same yoke, revolutionising not only scientific progress, but also, and most importantly, affirming the realisation of humanity's liberation from matter. The destruction of the traditional Cosmos meant the sending into infinity, into space, of all entities, whether human souls or purely material/physical bodies. Finally, the finite and infinite became united within this vast space; freedom from the 'baseness' of matter, from its imprisonment, was now attainable.

The end of the sixteenth century saw Johannes Kepler, a fervent Aristotelean, study Plato's five regular bodies from which he came to formulate a theory explaining the creation of the world by God. He considered that the distances from the sun should conform to the hierarchical structure of these bodies. For Kepler, the world was harmonious, and regular. Kepler's work was a fine example of how Renaissance scientists combined Aristotle's preoccupation with the material and Plato's God. This fusion was facilitated by the 'Christianisation' of Aristotle. For through the Thomist interpretation of Aristotelean thought as the intellectual gift of God, 'reason' for Aristotle came to equal the 'reified' soul in Plato. Hence, for Kepler being both an Aristotelean and believing in the cosmic arrangement of Plato was not contradictory,

for he was using the Godly gift to understand his soul through the study of nature, which was also God's creation.

Kepler's work contained traces of the union between the animistic and mechanistic vision of the universe which became characteristic of the Classical Age. In the *Mysterium Cosmographicum*, he explained how the planets were moved by the force of the soul, and claimed that sharing the forces of the souls was also the power of light and the power of attraction.<sup>75</sup> The pre-established mechanism was, once put into action, sufficient to maintain the correct evolution of the celestial bodies. Kepler made several discoveries on the irregular rhythm of the movement of the stars and saw this irregularity to be based upon physical causes. However, he was not capable of reaching the discovery made by Galileo because his idea of the world was mainly Aristotelean.<sup>76</sup> According to Kepler, the world was finite and was created; his theory would not admit the supposition of the break with this determined order.

Kepler's discoveries were ferociously attacked by Giordano Bruno (mainly a Humanist who, like Copernicus before him, took to mathematics to disprove the 'heretic' Aristoteleans)<sup>77</sup> who meant to prove that the world was indeed infinite. He did so through geometry based on the elaboration of Lucretius' atomic theory which was expressed in the principle of the 'minima'.<sup>78</sup> In spite of his weakness in mathematics, and his complete ignorance of the Archimedean physics (that movement was constant in an infinite space), Bruno was able to introduce a theory of the infinity of the universe based on a geometrical theory of space. The work of Copernicus, Kepler and Bruno among others, are examples of how neo-Platonist, Aristotelean and Platonist geometry combined in such a manner that permitted the interpretation of the discovery of the infinity of space according to Humanist socio-political and spiritual needs. The fusion of the two spheres of knowledge (philosophical and scientific) into one scientific movement further separated the individual from the Church, for it represented the empowerment of the individual on earth thereby reducing his/her need for clerical guidance.

In the seventeenth century Galileo's work represented the attempt of an entire "cosmic hierarchy," Christian and Greek, to struggle against its enslaving structure, and against those social barriers which it instituted. The struggle of which Galileo inherited the results gave rise to a curious mixture of freedom as the overcoming of the finite/infinite dichotomy on the one hand, and the actualisation of this freedom in the



world of matter, on the other. To the first struggle he owed his inspiration, to the second his method. The result was an astounding liberation from both. His discoveries proved that the earth was inherently thrown-into infinite space where God and humanity became intertwined, and the need for religious institutions rendered a fallacy on both the physical and spiritual planes. There was no doubt in Galileo's mind as to the nature of his discovery. He was essentially a Platonist who believed fervently that only those who have studied geometry were capable of true knowledge of the universe:

And I, I told you, that if someone does not know the truth by himself, it is impossible for anyone to give to him such knowledge. In fact, it is impossible to teach these things that are neither right nor wrong; but the right ones, by which I mean the necessary things, that is those which cannot be otherwise, all average spirit either knows them by itself, or can never learn them.<sup>79</sup>

Galileo was warning against the dangers that his discovery would eventually engender. The pretension to the knowledge of truth, the ultimate and unchanging truth, i.e. the Platonist *Idea*, was not to be grasped by the average individual, nor should this pretention exist. In the *Dialogue* and the *Discourses* Galileo told of the story of his discovery, of the kind of *language* one should use to discover Nature. He also told of the method, the scientific experiments with which to prove its validity. Galileo's science had a specific purpose, a value which cannot be denied. In its finality, it aimed to reach the "truth" which was to liberate humanity.

Similarly, Descartes' work applied the scientific method to prove the certainty of existence, and based this proof on a distinct relationship between thought and being. The famous proclamation, "I think therefore I am," implied that thought cannot be distinct from being, that my existence is certain insofar as I am conscious of my being in the world. This also extends to the proof of God's existence, for as long as I think that there is God, and I am conscious of God through my thought as existing, then God must exist, for I am the mirror and 'being' of God and thought on earth. In his philosophy, Descartes expresses quite clearly the unity between the humanist project for liberty from clerical control, and the capacity for science, more precisely knowledge, to ground this project in reality. For as the individual is able to ascertain the presence of God through thought, there is no reason for the Church to act as mediator between individuals and God. Furthermore, the Church can no longer set

claim to the knowledge of what God wills, for in being the mirror of nature and of God's creative will, the individual is finally able to interpret God's command and execute it independently from any religious order.

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In conclusion, a fundamental question is bound to be posed: have the contradictions pointed out earlier been resolved, and has humanity attained its aspired liberty? The answer is an ambivalent yes and no.

'Yes' insofar as it freed itself from the Medieval theological view and socio-political relations which depended on the Church for the continued existence of a given type of community, one which seemed to have congealed time and stopped all types of necessary developments. 'Yes' also insofar as it managed to overcome material scarcity and through scientific innovations, raise the level of subsistence by tapping the secrets of nature. 'Yes' insofar as it came to recognise its relationship to the objective order as existing independently of Church hierarchy and class structure; also it came to believe in a certain degree of self-worth, and an affirmation of its originality and creative capacities.

The negation of this self-emancipation lies in the effects of the methods used to achieve it. Humanity in order to overcome its enslavement came to see itself as the possessor of a divine, unalterable quality, a 'given' soul which would guide it to the ends of the earth and beyond, for the divine 'Good' became also its possession. All the mathematical theories taught in modern schools, of inertia, of infinity, of the laws of motion, etc... proved this 'given' divinity to all the generations since Galileo and Newton and continue to do so to the present day. They proved the supremacy of the human mind, proving existence solely on the power of thought. However, is mere certainty of existence sufficient to define us in terms of 'magnanimity of soul'? Have we acquired the Stoic peace of mind by reflecting upon the quality of this inner 'being'; have we become conscious of our true worth through 'reflexive knowledge'?

We did not have to. To reach infinity was our greatest dream, and once grasped we needed no longer to test this 'divine' soul, for unlike the Stoics' it needed no cultivation as it held God within, making its actions equal to those of the 'divine'. In its quest for the ultimate *truth*, humanity distinguished between those chosen by

God, those endowed with the 'divine intellect', and those who were condemned to remain in darkness. Of course, all expression of truth gained plausibility when manifested in the phenomenal world; for what proof had we of our divinity but the demonstration of our capacity for creation? Thus perceived, humanity is not irrational, for it has a reason to which science is catering with great indulgence. It is rather unconscious, intoxicated by the very brew it has taken as medicine. It is only now coming to terms with the havoc it wrought on the environment and on society. The destruction of its own universe lies before it, and it is incapable of reacting, it looks on with bewilderment and disbelief: How can the 'Good' yield such disastrous results, it asks itself.

Another question needs to be answered at this point. If in the seventeenth century the Renaissance theory of liberty has come to affirm its goals in the world, why has it remained to push for further liberty, why does the modern Western World seek liberty; have we not succeeded three centuries ago? What else does one need? An answer to this is present in Isaiah Berlin's analysis of positive liberty.

Renaissance liberty could only be complete through the realisation of self-consciousness, and the liberation of the soul. True liberty was to be achieved through the subject and its personal development. As Berlin showed in clear terms, such an actualisation of freedom succeeded primarily when the subject was completely isolated from the world. In the world, this freedom was impossible. Here, the contradiction of the spirit and the material was bound to appear. Subjectivity, as affirmation of individual will, could not be actualised *in-the-world*. It became the object of the household; it defined itself in the individual's freedom to choose personal ethical principles.<sup>80</sup> On the social level, the individual was subjected to the universal laws pronounced by the laws of reason which were, and remain to be, considered as value free, incapable of formulating an *ought* from an *is*. The struggle for "subjective" freedom continued. In accepting the Galilean affirmation of its liberty, humanity was enslaved by the very material it adopted. For in reducing God to the finite, it also reduced its own humanity to matter. As the laws of science tell us, matter is inanimate and can contain no subjectivity.

Since the Renaissance, the philosophical tradition inherited the contradiction between the subject and the world, the finite and infinite, the particular and the universal. This contradiction presenting itself as theory (freedom as unity with the

universal), is here frustrated, because it is only actualisable through a particular type of practice (the affirmation of liberty in-the-world through an objective other). In this context, Koyré's charge against modern science as the cause for the separation of Praxis and Theory gains further clarity. However, contrary to Koyré's assumption, it is not Newton, nor modern science in particular which are responsible for this split, but it is the very nature of the Renaissance idea of liberty which must carry the blame. Science is merely the instrument through which this liberty has come to project itself. Science and rationality are not ends in themselves, but cater to a human telos, to the 'Good', which has come to be defined as the ultimate liberty for the individual to be: "the greatest of all miracles in nature ... the centre of nature, the middle term of all things, the series of the world, the face of all, the bond and juncture of the universe."<sup>81</sup>

In this chapter, I sought to point out the essential historical and theoretical components which define the various elements constituting modern subjectivity. I have sketched the origins, and in the following chapter I shall illustrate how the Romantics continue to maintain, albeit through different means, the Humanist project of liberty. It will argue that the struggle for freedom came to be expressed in the necessity to unite the finite and infinite in the 'image' of the artist, and through the distinction between quality and quantity, equality and mere commonality.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Postmodern writers such as Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard and Baudrillard argue that society does not allow individuals to express an identity that is distinct from the norm.

<sup>2</sup>See Part II, Chapter IV of this dissertation on MacIntyre's critique of modern society.

<sup>3</sup>In the *Eclipse of Reason*, (New York: Continuum, 1974), p. 128; Horkheimer defines the crisis of modernity as "the crisis of reason [which] is manifested in the crisis of the individual, as whose agency it has developed...The individual once conceived of reason exclusively as an instrument of the self. Now he experiences the reverse of this self deification. The machine has dropped the driver; it is racing blindly into space. At the moment of consummation, reason has become irrational and stultified. The theme of this time is self-preservation, while there is no self to preserve".

<sup>4</sup>In the Preface to the *Order of Things*, (London: Tavistock, 1970) p. xviii, Foucault diagnosed modern western thought of suffering from aphasia. Describing the state of this affection, Foucault states: "It appears that certain aphasiacs, when shown various differently coloured skeins of wool on a table top, are consistently unable to arrange them in any coherent pattern; as though that simple rectangle were unable to serve in their case as a homogeneous and neutral space in which things could be placed so as to display at the same time the continuous order of their identities or differences as well as the semantic field of their denomination. Within this simple space in which things are normally arranged and given names, the aphasiac will create a multiplicity of tiny, fragmented regions in which nameless resemblances agglutinate things into unconnected islets; ... But no sooner have they been adumbrated than all these groupings dissolve again, for the field of identity that sustains them, however, continues to infinity, creating groups then dispersing them again, heaping up identical, superimposing different criteria, frenziedly beginning all over again, becoming more and more disturbed, and teetering finally on the brink of anxiety."

<sup>5</sup>In *After Virtue*, (London: Duckworth, 1980), p. 11, MacIntyre defines modernity's 'disease' as Emotivism, which is "the doctrine that all evaluative judgements and more specifically all moral judgements are nothing but expressions of preference, expressions of attitudes and feeling, insofar as they are moral or evaluative."

<sup>6</sup>Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, (London: Unwin, 1946), p. 487. Russell's attitude regarding the achievement of the Renaissance reflects to a certain extent the general attitude of modern philosophers; this is clearly present in the following observation: "the Renaissance was not a period of great achievement in philosophy, but it did certain things which were essential preliminaries to the greatness of the seventeenth century. In the first place, it broke down the rigid scholastic system, which had become an intellectual strait jacket. It revived the study of Plato, and thereby demanded at least so much independent thought as was required for choosing between him and Aristotle. In regard to both, it promoted a genuine and first-hand knowledge, free from the glosses of Neoplatonists and Arabic commentators. More important still, it encouraged the habit of regarding intellectual activity as a delightful social adventure, not a cloistered meditation aiming at the preservation of a predetermined orthodoxy."

<sup>7</sup>The Romantic movement, as it will be shown in Chapter II, was often regarded as merely a 'moment' which arrived in the wake of the French Revolution and preceded Marx. Its importance has often been noted in terms of literature and art, but rarely as a socio-political movement. Georg Lukàc's *Young Hegel*, and *Destruction of Reason* are notable exceptions.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. Part II, Chapter IV on MacIntyre's definition of the crisis of modernity in this study.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. Part III on postmodernity in the present work.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, (London: Duckworth, 1980), chapter 2.

<sup>11</sup>Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, (1980); Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, (1978); J.-F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, (1974); and Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la folie dans l'âge de la raison*, (1965).

<sup>12</sup>Stevie Davies, *Renaissance views of Man*, (Manchester UP, 1978), p. 1-3

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 4-6

<sup>15</sup>Cited in W. J. Richardson, *Heidegger*, (Hague: Nijhoff, 1963), p. 306.



- <sup>16</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup>Ernesto Grassi, *Heidegger and Renaissance Humanism*, (New York: Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1983).
- <sup>18</sup>Grassi's book demonstrates that the Humanists were aware of the 'materialist' interpretation they were making of Plato's conception of the 'Idea'. For them, the Classical Greek notions were anti-Christian, which also meant non-spiritual. For this reason, the ancient Greeks, presented through their Moslem interpreters, could not be interpreted in terms of non-phenomenality, on the contrary, Idea thought of in terms of a theory of forms, was directly associated with phenomena. Cf. Grassi, Ibid.
- <sup>19</sup>Ibid., p.9.
- <sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 17
- <sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 94
- <sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 19
- <sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 17
- <sup>24</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>25</sup>Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, ed. and trans. Francis M. Cornford, (Oxford UP, 1980), p. 322. The discussion on the doctrine of Forms is based upon Dr. Cornford's note.
- <sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 323
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>28</sup>This is demonstrated in J.L. Vives' "Fable on Man" trans. in Cassirer, *Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, (London: Phoenix, 1965), p. 387. In this fable is found described with fantastic detail the capacity of man to embody all animals and even be mistaken for the master of the Gods. His skill and fantastic physical constitution seems to have left all Gods in awe, hence giving them the incentive to elevate man to the highest of heavens and to give him the pleasure of sharing food and celestial comfort with the most deserving of Gods, Jupiter. In this fable the author cites the multiplicity of human talents which allows man to become one of the rulers of the universe; in essence to become a god.
- <sup>29</sup>Cited in Gusdorf, *ibid.*, p. 146-47 from Ficino's work on Platonist Theology.
- <sup>30</sup>Agnes Heller, *Renaissance Man*, trans. R. E. Allen, (London & Boston: Routledge and K. Paul, 1978), p. 307.
- <sup>31</sup>Ernest Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1968), p. 122.
- <sup>32</sup>Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty*, (Oxford UP, 1969), p. 131.
- <sup>33</sup>Cited in Michel Foucault, *Le Souci de soi*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), p. 60.
- <sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 71
- <sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 62
- <sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 85
- <sup>37</sup>A. Dupront, *Espace et Humanisme*, (Bib. d'Humanisme et Renaissance, Droz, 1946), p. 15
- <sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 9-10
- <sup>39</sup>Gusdorf, *op. cit.*, p. 129
- <sup>40</sup>Heller, *op. cit.*, p. 327
- <sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 326
- <sup>42</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 306
- <sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 305
- <sup>45</sup>A. Koyré, *Etudes d'histoire de la pensée scientifique*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), p. 130
- <sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 53
- <sup>47</sup>Berlin, *op. cit.*, p. 139-40
- <sup>48</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>49</sup>Cf. Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la folie*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1960).
- <sup>50</sup>For a lengthy discussion of these issues, cf. Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, *Order*



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*Out of Chaos*, (London: Fontana, 1988), Books I & II.

<sup>51</sup>A. Koyré, *Newtonian Studies*, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1965), p. 23-4

<sup>52</sup>Arnold Brecht, *Political Theory*, (Princeton UP, 1973), Books I-III.

<sup>53</sup>Modern critiques of scientific integration in the socio-political and philosophical domain is largely associated with the early phenomenologists such as Husserl and Heidegger, and the critique of reason by the Frankfurt School: Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse.

<sup>54</sup>It was apparent as early as the ninth century, the extent to which Arabic philosophy and science effected and influenced Medieval Christianity. The Archbishop of Zaragoza in the ninth century was critical of the decadence of the Christian youth in his time, because of their enchantment by the Arabic culture emanating from Southern Spain, to which all of Europe then looked: "They are incapable of writing a correct sentence in Latin but excel the Moslems in the knowledge of the finest grammatical and rhetorical points of Arabic. The Scriptures and the writings of the Church fathers lie unread, but they rush to read and translate the latest manuscript from Cordoba." Cf. Norman Daniel, *The Arabs and Medieval Europe*, (1979, 2nd Edition).

<sup>55</sup>Ernest Cassirer, (ed.) *Renaissance Man*, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972), p. 30.

<sup>56</sup>Koyré, *Etudes...*, op. cit., p. 34. The discussion on the Platonic and Aristotelean interpretation in the Middle Ages is derived, to a large extent, from Koyré's article "Platon et Aristote".

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 40-45

<sup>58</sup>According to Aristotle, "the soul is inseparable from its body, or at any rate that certain parts of it are (it it has parts) - for the actuality of some of them is the actuality of the parts themselves. Yet some may be separable because they are not the actualities of any body at all. Further, we have no light on the problem whether the soul may not be the actuality of its body in the sense in which the sailor is the actuality of the ship." Jonathan Barnes, (ed.) *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Revised Oxford translation, (Princeton U.P., 1985, 2nd edition), p. 657. "On the Soul", (II: 413a).

<sup>59</sup>Aristotle makes a distinction between soul and thought. in *De Anima*, "On the Soul," (ibid., II: 413b), he states: "we have no evidence as yet about the power of reflexion; it seems to be a different kind of soul, differing as what is eternal from what is perishable; it alone is capable of being separated. All the other parts of soul, ..., are, in spite of certain statements to the contrary, incapable of separate existence though, of course, distinguishable by definition." (Ibid., p. 659); finally, Aristotle concludes that the "soul is an actuality or account of something that possesses a potentiality of being such." (Ibid., II: 414a).

<sup>60</sup>Koyré, *Etudes...*, op. cit., p. 42

<sup>61</sup>The problem which seems to preoccupy Aristotle in Book III of "On the Soul," harks back to the theory of causality. In the analysis of the relationship between the body and soul, hence between substance and form, Aristotle succeeds in positing an efficient cause, a motor, a universal creator. For Aristotle the answer to the question: who/what comes first, the potential or the actual, the father or the son, the egg or the hen, is to be found in what is actual, that which proceeds from the potential. Nothing is produced without a motor which already exists and is capable of producing. Furthermore, Aristotle recognises that an eternal and indestructible being must exist as the motor or producer of earth. Because this being is eternal and indestructible, it must have always existed. It could not be a simple 'potentia', something which was none other than a possibility incapable of being an actuality. On the contrary, it must have always been "separable, impassible and pure". In order to differentiate earthly human spirit from the spirit of creation, Aristotle makes a distinction between the spirit which becomes all things and that which creates all things:

In each class of things, as in the whole of nature, we find two relevant factors: (1) a substance which potentially characterises all the particularities in this class, (2) a productive class in the sense that it creates all (the second is opposed to the first, e.g. as the art is opposed to matter); these distinct elements must be equally found in the soul.

...

In fact, the spirit as we have described it is what it is in its capacity to

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become all the things, whereas there is another spirit which is what it is in its capacity to create all things...

...  
The spirit in this sense is separable, impassible, pure, because it is, in its own nature, an activity. [III, 5, 430a 10-19]

God for Aristotle is different from God for Plato or even from the Christian God, for He is not the Creator of the universe. Aristotle affirms that nothing is produced from nothing, because the substance and form exist and are in constant movement, they are always and must continue to be so. Time also was not created "because one would have never had "before" and "after" if time did not exist" (Meta., xii, 7). Nevertheless, there must be a force that insures the celestial movement and that of life on earth. This efficient cause must itself be without fluctuation, impassible, and pure. In order to define the efficient cause of existence while maintaining the distinction between spirit and soul, Aristotle writes: "actual knowledge is identical to its object: for the individual, potential knowledge in time is anterior to actual knowledge, but in totality of the universe, it is not anterior not even in time." [III, 5, 430a 20-25] In *De Generatione Animalium*, Aristotle affirms that reason is accorded to man "from without" [*The Works of Aristotle*, trans. J.A. Smith, *De Gen. Anim.* II, 3, (736b 27-29)] and considers in the *Metaphysics* that the spirit, thought and object of thought are identical. [Meta. XI, 7, 1072b 18-22] This implies that the efficient cause of existence is only knowable through the extensive development of reason. This is how life in accordance with the precepts of reason became in Aristotle the finality of man. In the *Nichomachian Ethics*, Aristotle affirms that the most noble human activity is to be found in the development of reason, where this reason is the principle of the creator's spirit, both impassible and eternal.

<sup>62</sup>In *De Anima* (On the Soul), Aristotle proposes that that part of the soul which is separate and immovable, i.e. divine, is that of thought; in *Eudemian Ethics*, he states that thought is nevertheless distinct from god: "Thought, then, is not the starting-point of thinking nor deliberation of deliberation. What, then, can be the starting-point except chance? Thus everything would come from chance. Perhaps there is a starting-point with none other outside it, and this can act in this sort of way by being such as it is. The object of our search is this - what is the commencement of movement in the soul? The answer is clear: as in the universe, so in the soul, it is god. For in a sense the divine element in us moves everything. The starting-point of reasoning is not reasoning, but something greater. What, then, could be greater even than knowledge and intellect but god? For excellence is an instrument of the intellect." (VII: 1248a - 20-29), Barnes, *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 1979. As such, thought appears as a 'divine element', but is not the starting-point, not god per se.

<sup>63</sup>This in fact is not original; it has already been argued by Averroes (Ibn Rushd) in his commentary on Plato's *Republic* (trans. Rosenthal), that it is evident in early Greek philosophy, and more particularly in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, that there is reason to establish the idea that there may be a spirit that is equivalent to a monotheistic God.

<sup>64</sup>Koyré, *Etudes...*, op. cit., p. 49

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup>E. Cassirer, *The Individual and Cosmos...*, op. cit., p. 84

<sup>67</sup>Heller, op. cit., p. 384

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 388

<sup>69</sup>Cf. Hans Blumenberg, *The Copernican Revolution*, Trans. Wallace, MIT Press, 1987) This shows how Humanists such as Copernicus were pre-occupied with science as means through which such actualisation in the world may become a possibility.

<sup>70</sup>Cassirer, op. cit., p. 89

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 92

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 118

<sup>74</sup>A. Koyré, "Galileo and Plato", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol iv, (New York: 1943), p. 400-428.

<sup>75</sup>Koyré, *Etudes...*, op. cit., p. 56

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 57

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- <sup>77</sup>Cf. Hans Blumenberg, *The Copernican Revolution*, (Cambridge Mas.: MIT Press, 1980).  
<sup>78</sup>Koyré, op. cit., p. 58  
<sup>79</sup>Translation found in Koyré, "Galileo and Plato", op. cit., p. 427  
<sup>80</sup>For a discussion on the crisis of modern ethics cf. A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, op. cit.  
<sup>81</sup>Ficino, cited by Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought II*, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965), p. 92.

## Chapter II. Subjectivity as Creation in the Romantic Age

The Romantic movement in Germany lasted a short period, from 1797 to the end of the 1830s (although the early texts appeared in 1760, and the last of the adherents to the movement died in 1860), during which three phases may be distinguished. Early Romanticism was initiated by Wackenroder and Tieck who posthumously published works on the theory of art in the *Outpourings from the Heart of an Art-Loving Monk* (1797), and the magazine *Athenäum* (1798-1800). Mme. de Staël's book *De L'Allemagne* (1810) on the Romantic movement included also Goethe and Schiller as among its earlier *Sturm und Drang* leaders. Later or Middle Romantic phase lasted until 1815 mainly in Heidelberg (although Berlin and Munich were also centers for this phase) counted among its members von Arnim, Brentano, Eichendorff, Fouqué, Hoffmann, Chamisso, the Schlegel brothers, and Zacharias Werner. Finally, the Late Romantic phase which lasted until the late 1830s included works dealing with scientific and medical research alongside those on literature and art, religion and philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

The Romantic revolt in its various expressions (scientific, philosophical and artistic) did not aim to destroy a specific element in the new order of things, but sought to re-introduce a theory based on nature in order to differentiate between individuals within society. The Romantics, as did the Humanists, considered that a hierarchical order in nature existed as an ideal and not as the result of a real evolution. What mattered was the quality of the "metaphysical context and not the external, historical connections between phenomena;"<sup>2</sup> however, the difference between *real* and *ideal* connections was not always consistently observed. They sought to ground this type of differentiation both in metaphysics (i.e. pure knowledge) and natural science, for they did not perceive scientific discoveries to be independent or separate from the social world. Rather, they saw science as practical application involving projects concerned with the improvement of external living standards, the social order or people's intellectual education. However, in all branches of science, concrete and technical applications received theoretical justification, but were consistently considered as subordinate to pure knowledge.<sup>3</sup> This meant the subordination of reason to divinity, and practice to theory. For this reason, the Romantic scientist sought to limit the extent to which reason was the only source of human understanding and to consider faith, feelings and dreams as elements capable of helping one comprehend nature. On this subject von Engelhardt in his article



*Romanticism in Germany* <sup>4</sup> states that according to the Romantic scientists "the Absolute foundation of both nature and the mind can be grasped neither by 'intellectual appraisal' nor by 'belief in reason'," for "every word in favour of the Absolute was merely a 'sign of it'."<sup>5</sup> Nature in this context would not simply imply physical nature, but anthropomorphised and *biological* nature, in which humanity may still find the definition of its ontology.

The object of this Chapter is twofold. First, it aims to establish parallels between the Humanist project for liberty elucidated in Chapter I and the Romantic movement in the nineteenth century. The disillusionment, extreme optimism and pessimism and the confusion resulting from them will be shown to have a twofold source. On the one hand, optimism is -purely in the ideal *form*- the result of the capacity in the arts and sciences to overcome the dichotomy of human existence as finitude, which is separate from the Infinite absolute. On the other hand, pessimism is the attitude taken by the artists and scientists when facing the result of the French Revolution, (here the French Revolution is taken as the symbol of the actualisation of freedom wrested from the old order in socio-political and economic terms), as representing not the elevation of the finite to the infinite, but the reification of God and the elements which constitute the divinity of human nature. Madness and irony return to haunt nineteenth century intellectuals as they did during the Classical Age two centuries earlier, only now they no longer represent simply 'death', but most terrifying of all, they represent eternal damnation, for God was there no more. With God's disappearance came not merely the absolute negation of the divine character of Renaissance 'Man' as individual maker of the universe, but, also, and more importantly, of the artist/scientist's claim to be the *creator* of the new world and its absolute link with Infinity.

Secondly, this Chapter establishes further similarities between the Humanists and the Romantics in terms of the struggle for the recognition of subjectivity as a differentiated 'individuality' within society, one which is based on the individual's capacity to use reason and imagination toward the achievement of personal freedom from finitude. To do so, the Romantics based human merit on a 'theory of knowledge' and a 'theory of genetics' which, when combined, provided the bases for social stratification. Baumgarten's 'Science of Intuition', Schiller's 'Aesthetics', and Herder's 'genetics' combined to provide a mixture of reason and imagination upon which the Romantics based their distinction between 'quality' and 'quantity' which establishes the measure of human worth. The failure of this distinction to bring forth

a socially recognised and accepted measure of 'quality' brought an intellectual assault on the merits of technology (responsible for the quantification of value) which characterised the attitude of the intellectuals during the nineteenth and twentieth century.

### *Infinity and Finitude: Unresolved Tension*

The Romantic Age suffered a sense of loss of self and of identity which followed the devastation of the Napoleonic invasions, leaving the old German Empire fragmented and desolate. Hölderlin expressed the spirit of the age most poignantly:

But we are destined to find no resting place, and suffering  
mortals dwindle and fall blindly from one hour to the next,  
hurled like water from ledge to ledge, downwards for years  
to the great abyss. (*Hyperion* Schicksallied)

Hölderlin's dispiritedness was shared by many noted German Romantics who saw the expression of bright optimism resulting from the French Revolution turn to bitter irony. According to Ernest Behler:

this melancholic note of irony devolves from the contradictory experience of infinite longing in the face of the finitude of life. Immeasurable sadness permeates every form of life, since the absolute can only appear in limited, finite, and transitory form. Pain is the basic timber of nature, transitoriness the mark of art, and the death-wish the desire of him who encounters such experiences. At best, we can only mask and in irony disguise this "Weltschmerz" through feigned laughter and gaiety. Marx and Engels explained this attitude simply as a reflection of what they called the predominant "German misery."<sup>6</sup>

Literature's shift from gaiety and laughter to tragedy is seen by Behler to stem from the "naïve expectations turned disillusionment" which took place after the eighteenth century. Frederick Schlegel in his last lectures of 1829 stated that

genuine irony is the irony of love. It arises from the feeling of finiteness and of one's own limitations and the apparent contradiction of these feelings with the concept of infinity inherent in all genuine love.<sup>7</sup>

It is often in love, both earthly and sublime, that the whole being is moved to great

feats and sacrifice, that optimism and pessimism combine to satisfy the lover's hunger for extremes. It is there also that individuals find disillusionment and deep loss. In the above passage, Schlegel expressed the wish of the Romantic artist for whom art should elevate the artist and humanity to the level of the sublime absolute. However, disillusionment sets in when the artist recognises the limits of human powers, and their failure to elevate the soul to a higher level of spiritual vision. This bitter realisation was followed by the identification of several different types of irony: "God's irony" (Gottes Ironie), "World Historical Irony" (Welthistorische Ironie), and "general irony of the world," (allgemeine Ironie der Welt).<sup>8</sup> These formulations came as a sense of emptiness permeated the spirit of the age. Benjamin Constant's speculation about "La mort de Dieu?," and Heinrich Heine's questioning of "reason and discernable plan in the course and eventual fate of our world,"<sup>9</sup> both pronounced the spiritual impoverishment deeply felt and suffered by these intellectuals. How did this spirit come about, and develop?

In Chapter I, it became clear that freedom from clerical and, consequently, feudal bondage appeared, in the first instance, as the overthrow of institutional ties maintained by Church and clergy took place. The Humanist project which meant to introduce a theology based on the simple assertion of the existence of the individual 'soul', whose development was to be the responsibility of the individual and in which the individual's salvation or damnation resided, had as a result the glorification of individuality on the basis of its capacity to *know* God through nature. In this context, irony, expressed as God's irony, may be defined here as "an ill-timed or perverse arrival of an event or circumstance that is in itself desirable."<sup>10</sup> The actualisation of freedom from clerical control, in itself desirable, came in the form of the French Revolution, while initially exalting the intellectual elites around Europe, this first moment of fervor was followed by disillusionment. Disillusionment was the result of the reign of terror and mob rule which led to the blind execution of eminent intellectuals. This left the Romantics with the image of a loss rather than a gain in actual liberty. Moreover, far from expressing a highly 'evolved' soul, the French mob demonstrated basic human instincts whose soul did not seem to be elevated by the great achievements assigned to it by the Humanists. A counter-revolutionary attitude appeared in the neighbouring countries of Germany and England where the intellectual elite fell into a spiritual doubt, later expressed as 'emptiness' of both the human soul and the universe.

This perhaps would explain how the intellectuals of the nineteenth century

came to maintain a distinctively dichotomous attitude toward freedom and society. On the one hand, they pursued the Renaissance *will* to maintain religion in the realm of nature as the property of the individual, and sought with abandonment the communion with the absolute universal. On the other hand, they continued to use the power of science and instrumental reason, developed in the Enlightenment, in order to further prove the absolute power of knowledge and that of humanity on earth. The Renaissance project was therefore not altered, only deeper disillusionment was expressed as the reality of materialist science and reified spirituality gained further ground in the social, political and economic changes which accompanied the aftermath of the French Revolution. The Romantics, unlike the Humanists, dealt more clearly with two extremes which Hegel denounced as "infinitely absolute negativity" whose unrelenting opposition often led them from "joyous freedom to sadness, melancholy and despair."<sup>11</sup>

In Germany, an especially high, if not the highest, place was reserved in Romanticism for the artist and art in all its diversity. Romanticism as a movement was, more often than not, associated with art and literature. Art represented the culmination and reflection of the whole of reality. It was in art that the artist, poet, intellectual ..., was able to combine the dichotomous tendencies with which the artist as creator contended. Artists suffered from a split personality: "*Doppelgänger*, the contrast between everyday realities and dreams, consciousness and subconsciousness, sensuality and reason, bourgeois and artist, society and the individual, crime and virtue, nature and culture, and day and night" pervade all Romantic literature whose essence is fixed in the Romantic conviction "of the ideal-real unity of the world."<sup>12</sup> Artists believed in their capacity to join God and the infinite through their work. Friedrich Schlegel even suggested a mathematical formula for Romantic poetry wherein the Poetic Ideal is the very expression of God, and this through the use of the variables such as the fantastic, the sentimental and mimicry. Similarly, according to Novalis' slogan 'magical idealism,' nature and history are meant to find true freedom in artistic creations, and subject and object manifest themselves as metaphysically identical. Hence God, the subject of creation, becomes identical to the object of creation, be it Humanity, Nature, or History. Life in its totality is, for the Romantics, a longing for the fluid intertwining of the finite with the infinite, which can be experienced in friendship and love. However, marked by a dichotomy between bourgeois reality and artistic productivity, coupled with the foundering of personal relationships, reality appeared to the artist in the form of irony. As such, the relationship between the artist and the infinite came to be



described as “floating intelligence” thereby representing the tension between the ideal and real not in terms of subjective arbitrariness, but in absolute quality.

In Britain, as in Germany, individuality took on a specific value, a religious and somewhat messianic character, especially in the writings of poets and intellectuals who saw their work as divine creation. When translating Spinoza’s tract *On Prophecy*, Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote that “with the exception of Christ, none ever apprehended the revelations of God without the assistance of imagination, that is of words or forms imaged forth in the mind, and ... therefore ... the qualification to prophecy is rather a more vivid imagination than a profounder understanding than other men.”<sup>13</sup> Shelley’s use of the word *imagination* is not meant to be deprecatory for he writes elsewhere that the “great instrument of moral good is the imagination,”<sup>14</sup> and that the “office and character of a poet participates in the divine nature as regards providence, no less than as regards creation.”<sup>15</sup> Shelley, Blake, and other poets of the period, took their work far beyond artistic expression, and like Renaissance Humanist poets who saw Homer as their guide, used their ‘gift’ of imagination to encompass ethical and ontological reality. Blake’s entire poetic canon was devised to embody and engender a philosophical vision: imagination was considered as the principle which bound his art in union with other forms of thought and perception. Similarly, Coleridge developed a theory of imagination which accounts equally for the production of art and also “all human perception.”<sup>16</sup> In *Religious Musings* the poet, portrayed by Coleridge, was summoned by a Cherub’s trump and lifted to the height of vision.

The language and vocabulary used by these poets was adapted to express secular purposes. Henry More, Berkeley and Swedenborg agreed in defining the ‘spiritual’ as ‘mental’. Blake’s doctrine that “Mental Things are alone Real” had its precedent in Renaissance and Enlightenment philosophy where the conversion of the phenomena to intelligible thought, and the reference of knowledge to mental activity both made of the imagination a literary and epistemological principle. According to M.H. Abrams, Christianity has the tendency, (one which he also associated with the Romantic Period), “to internalize apocalypse by transferring the theatre of events from the outer earth and heaven to the spirit of the single believer;”<sup>17</sup> in these terms he summarised the “high Romantic argument”:

Faith in an apocalypse by revelation had been replaced by faith in an apocalypse by revolution, and this now gave away to faith in an apocalypse by imagination or cognition.



In the ruling two-term frame of Romantic thought, the mind of man confronts the old heaven and earth and possesses within itself the power ... to transform them into a new heaven and new earth, by means of a total revolution of consciousness.<sup>18</sup>

Abrams' analysis is enlightening as it establishes the thread which links the Humanist resolve to go against the Church in the Renaissance in order for humanity to appropriate its salvation, to the French Revolution, the adherents of which perceived equality as the actualisation of *freedom from* birth right, the guild and the Church, as lived experience in-the-world. The third stage, represented by the Romantics, sought the reappropriation of the inner 'man,' i.e. human consciousness of freedom. Just as in a Hegelian dialectic the third stage involves the synthesis of the oppositions of earlier periods, so should the Romantic project for freedom as consciousness and self-consciousness be the synthesis of reappropriated salvation and reason. However, bitter irony expressed by the Romantics tells a different story. The Romantics expressed violent disillusionment, and in some, such as with Fichte, one may find an expression of absolute subjectivism which renders reconciliation between individual and society inconceivable. This irony, loss of self and of identity, point to the failure of progress toward freedom due to the nature of the components which the Romantics, like their Renaissance ancestors, sought: the overcoming of dichotomy between infinity and finitude in the realm of the imagination, rather than, as Hegel would suggest, in the realm of the actual. The Humanists and the Romantics sought to appropriate the spirit in terms of mere consciousness, for they conceived of it as an other-worldly entity. Hegel, on the other hand, would argue, as we will see in Chapter I of Part II, that God/spirit must be a determinate entity because it is perceivable by determinate beings (i.e. humans).

Renaissance and Enlightenment philosophies are shown here to have survived in a form which combined the aspirations of both ages: the will to reach the infinite through the finite of the Renaissance, and the use of scientific reason to achieve freedom in the world. Here, both enterprises are frustrated. The Romantics seemed to be suffering from a twofold disillusionment, for the reaching of infinity through finitude remained an illusion with or without the power of materialist reason. Infinity is achievable solely through the power of the imagination. However, because of its material-bound nature and purpose, reason does not allow the actualisation of this divine gift. This occurred because of the alternative dimension, viz. technology, to which reason catered with great indulgence, thereby usurping the project of freedom

as spiritual privilege, and allying itself with the development of freedom from material want. The Industrial Revolution and its diverse restructuring effects on the social and economic spheres undermined the project of the Romantics, stifling, yet again, the spiritual dimension of Renaissance Humanism. Infinity and finitude remained to dwell in the hearts and minds of those who felt abandoned by the industrial age and cheated by 'corrupt' reason.

### *Quality vs. Quantity: the Romantic Theory of Knowledge*

According to Irving Babbitt "a thing is romantic when, ..., it violates the normal sequence of cause and effect in favor of adventure. ... A thing is romantic when it is strange, unexpected, intense, superlative, extreme, unique, etc."<sup>19</sup> Romanticism, as a literary genre, denotes a predominance of the element of fiction over reality in literature. Babbitt observes that this type of romanticism refers to literature found as the "spontaneous product of the popular imagination of the Middle Ages."<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, Babbitt makes a general statement wherein he claims "that the uncultivated human imagination in all times and places is romantic in the same way. It hungers for the thrilling and the marvelous and is, in short, incurably melodramatic."<sup>21</sup>

This definition does not come with much surprise to modern readers, but Romanticism as a social and literary movement goes further in its implications. Beyond literature, Romanticism defines the intellectual movement of the nineteenth century, whose contributions helped shape the socio-political theories of the nation-state. Romanticism was concerned with the redefinition of the world not merely as a political organisation, but more importantly, in religious, ethical, and social terms. The Romantics were faced with what they saw as their task to define the content of the demands voiced in the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen" of 1789 and give them an objective and actual existence. This meant the redefinition of the structure of society, which they saw better established according to the precepts of reason and science, wherein each individual will be rated on the social echelon according to his/her achievement as a rational individual. To this end the Romantics elaborated a 'theory of knowledge', which they used as a measuring-stick, according to which humanity and its socio-political relations may be arranged.

One of the first theories of knowledge to try and break with earlier ones is associated with A.G. Baumgarten's "Science of Intuition" or *Aesthetica* (1750) the

object of which was to investigate a "mode of knowledge."<sup>22</sup> Baumgarten started with the distinctions made by earlier philosophers, Leibniz and Wolff, which pointed out two types of knowledge: what gives us 'clear ideas' of things, sufficiently clear for practical purposes, and enables us to distinguish one object from another; and what gives us "distinct ideas," distinct insofar as the knowledge of the components of these objects allows us the understanding of the why and wherefore, a knowledge which promotes the recognition of *formal* (essence) truth rather than mere *phenomenal* (appearance) truth. Baumgarten's theory of knowledge mediates between the two: one which is neither purely that of the phenomenal whole, nor the product of scientific and philosophical analysis. This is known as *Confusa*, i.e. a "confluence" or "fusing together" of elements.<sup>23</sup> This type of knowledge attempts to investigate a form neither empirical nor purely intuitive, but which combines both to represent in clearer form the human process of learning and knowing. His use of 'intuition' should not be confused with the Romantic movement precisely because he does not undertake to understand intuition through intuition, but leaves to the power of reason the processes involved in their prompt apprehension as wholes. As such, methods of rational analysis act as a form of knowledge which in itself is not analytical nor easily accessible to rational inspection.

Baumgarten's theory of knowledge contributed in a threefold manner to the development of Romanticism: first, it reacted strongly against the Enlightenment's empiricism and challenged it by transcending its enquiry into the knowledge of the human psyche to involve spheres of human knowledge which, until then, were thought beneath rational concerns. Second, Baumgarten remained, in spite of this achievement, a product of the Enlightenment as he continued to profess that reason was the ultimate "queen of the faculties."<sup>24</sup> Finally, his study helped establish a firm distinction, in rational terms, between a higher and an inferior form of intelligence, a distinction which imparted by itself a "qualitative" value to the exercise of human faculties. Moreover, Baumgarten's naming of this theory of knowledge *Aesthetics*, and later on Schiller's own letters *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, may have contributed to the association of Aesthetics with art, and the Science of Intuition with what Babbitt termed "romantic."

Aside from Goethe, Schiller may be considered as one of Germany's most gifted poet/philosopher whose work, although seemingly dichotomous,<sup>25</sup> represents the genius of the age in its capacity to seek practical solutions to practical problems while using sublime poetic language and prose. For Schiller, aesthetics did not mean

simply art as beauty, but art as the actualisation in-the-world of objective truth. This is apparent in his reflections on Kant's *Critique of Judgement*. Upon studying Kant's theory which sought to free aesthetics from all subjective considerations thereby allowing them to join the universal, Schiller could not help but ask whether Kant did not reduce the word 'beauty' to an empty concept.

Schiller objected to Kant's reduction of the 'emotional', such as grace and love, to mere empty concepts the existence of which appeared merely formal, not practical. In Letter XXV, Schiller asked what then becomes of grace and graciousness, of those moral deeds in which the joy in the doing makes "the whole man move together." This was echoed by Coleridge who similarly, while working through the *Metaphysics of Morals*, asked "What then becomes of love -love, not as the mere beneficence to which Kant seems to reduce it, but love as spontaneously outflowing sympathy?"<sup>26</sup> In his rejection of Kant's extreme subjectivism, Schiller joined Hegel in his interest in the practical and the possible, rather than in the merely ideal. Education for Schiller implied not the abandonment of theoretical and abstract ideals, but a necessary orientation of those ideals, leading toward the practical and the possible. Through education Schiller sought to transform the more primitive and self-involved motives in the cause of interests transcending the merely personal. Kant appeared to Schiller as preoccupied himself too much with 'man' and not dealing with the objective 'other' in and through which 'man's' actualisation of 'real' freedom was to occur. Schiller's understanding of aesthetics as a relation was reflected in Hegel's synthesis in which subjective self-actualisation was maintained through an inter-subjective interaction in society.

Schiller's interest in education stemmed from his earlier studies on the nature of human knowledge, and freedom of the individual will. In his work *Philosophie der Physiologie* he attempted to answer the question posed by Christian Grave, translator of Ferguson's *Moral Philosophy*: "How without assuming a dual source of knowledge in man, the one natural, the other supernatural, are we to explain his power to determine his own thinking? How without recourse to innate ideas, ensure his freedom to think and act as he chooses?"<sup>27</sup> Calling upon Baumgarten's theory of knowledge, Schiller studied the interaction between body and mind which meant to prove the assumption that the will is free and not entirely supplanted by the effects and desires of the physical. His first distinction was of *Aufmerksamkeit* or the capacity of the psyche to recognise "certain links in the chain of involuntary associations rather than to others."<sup>28</sup> This was later enhanced in Letter XIX with the



recognition of *Selbstbewusstsein*, or self-awareness which he saw as an essential, although inexplicable, attribute of human selfhood, an element which imparts a necessary wholeness to the psycho-physical organism. For Schiller, the psychic power related to *Selbstbewusstsein* is *erdichten*, a word which does not imply poetry making but is cognate with it (the simplex *dichten* may also mean to feign, invent, fabricate...). This connection points to "that impulse to seek and find in the freedom of aesthetic creativity the source of man's power to make himself what he will."<sup>29</sup>

In Letter XXIII Schiller introduced the notion of the 'leap' where he repudiated the rationalist assumption that the abstractions of reason were formulated by one who yesterday was little more than an animal. Here Schiller refuted the generalisations brought forward by philosophers of the Enlightenment who studied the mind from its 'state of nature'.<sup>30</sup> For Schiller there must be a 'discontinuity' between the two stages of consciousness (since a human being can live in one without ever developing into the other). He envisaged the arrival of the 'leap' at an early stage in human development with the first glimpse of self-consciousness (what Hegel defined as self-recognition in the Master-Slave dialectic). The 'leap' is a 'given' whose origins, he stated in letter XIX, are shrouded in mist unfathomable by either Metaphysics or Physics. The appearance of self-awareness is not connected to merit, nor its absence a fault. However, once recognised it is our responsibility to develop it. In it lie the seeds of freedom. It is in this sense that Schiller can say that the aesthetic is the condition of the will, and as such the will is never wholly free from chance and caprice of nature; the will remains free insofar as it has already been determined by an outside factor.<sup>31</sup>

In Schiller's theory of freedom, there are two basic elements. First, a natural 'given' which was closely associated with Herder's theory on 'genetics', and second his notion of the 'leap'. Schiller's view of human nature, adopted by the Romantics, took as a given that individuals were born with a predetermined set of hereditary attributes directing their possibilities of self-actualisation as 'free will' in society. Schiller called this 'genetic' connection the 'gift of nature' which was in some measure dependent on the 'favour of fortune'.<sup>32</sup> In the nature of genetic inquiry, the law of causality was pushed to its limits in order to explain the diversity present in the different levels of human achievement. Schiller believed that a child's exploration of his/her environment shaped to a large degree the gifts of intellectual, aesthetic, or moral life that he/she will lead in adult life. Also, he thought it idle to pin the primary cause in faulty education since what we were faced with was a cycle: from generation



to generation

the trouble starts early, often enough in our mother's womb.  
As we are, so are our children. No one can give to posterity  
anything better than himself.<sup>33</sup>

Here, both Herder and Schiller fell short of early Humanist thought which extolled the infinite possibilities of all individuals to attain freedom, on the condition that they obtain the knowledge of how to use the superior quality of reason. Humanism did not care to, nor was capable of, presenting a genetic theory because it was still operating under a Christian belief that all individuals were equal before God on the one hand, and under the rigid hierarchical system of Church and feudal order on the other. Only the development of the 'soul,' given to everyone in common, was the responsibility of the individual. In essence, Schiller elaborated, and, to a certain extent modified, the Renaissance idea of freedom as the simple distinction between subject and object. In his theory he made further distinctions between the subject who could make the distinction, and humanity, (although indirectly a subject of action in the world), who was incapable of making such a distinction. Freedom then came to be associated with providence and with a specific reference to class in society. The Renaissance's Christian idea of equality of all individuals before God was thereby surpassed, and more practical, earthly, and hierarchical considerations combined to establish freedom, by nature, as the property of a given individual in a given social strata.

Schiller's work reflects a pragmatic rather than an ideological approach to problem resolution. His work faithfully reflects, rather than deals with and resolves, the problems of the reality of his age which are products of the structure of his society. This is clearly demonstrated in his conclusion to the Letters where he questions the validity of his argument in stating:

But does such a State of Aesthetic Semblance really exist?  
And if so, where is it to be found? As a need, it exists in  
every finely attuned soul; as a realized fact, we are likely to  
find it, like the pure Church and the pure Republic, only in  
some few chosen circles...<sup>34</sup>

I would agree with Georg Lukács who commented that Schiller's writings gave expression to many "illusions" of the possibility of returning to "small communities" in which "the exemplary social function...[was] a general feature of the

age," and "where a community of intellectually and morally outstanding individuals not only labour[ed] to educate each other, to develop each other's various faculties in a general humanist sense, but also [sought] to further various social goals, in particular, the voluntary harmonious phasing-out of the vestiges of feudalism and the transition from outmoded methods in agriculture to modern capitalist ones."<sup>35</sup> Although Lukács distinguished Goethe and Schiller from the Romantics and insisted that the former belonged to the German classics, I should like to maintain that the Romantics, as the Humanists did before them, used the classics as a base allowing them to develop a theory upon which they were able to establish ground for a definition of 'particularity' as 'quality', and as such distinguish it from the 'quantitatively' defined 'individuality' of the French Revolution. They used the discoveries in biology, and the greater 'faith' in science to establish theories, whose content allowed the drawing of class distinctions within a society, the establishment of which had suddenly made earlier forms obsolete.

The second element in Schiller's theory of freedom consists in the notion of the 'leap' which allows the passage from mere recognition to self-recognition, a first step, the successful accomplishment of which depends on education and the undertaking of the responsibility to develop the elements conducive to freedom's actualisation in the world. In this theory, Schiller may be seen as undertaking the establishment (or discovery) of a solution to the Humanist project of freedom, the failure of which was based primarily on its incapacity to become an actuality in the world without having recourse to scientific reason. However, Schiller's theory seems to commit a similar error and bases itself on a 'genetic' theory, the essential legitimacy of which relies to a great extent upon science. It can then be said that Schiller's achievement lies in his capacity to mark the shift in the struggle against the Church in the Renaissance to a struggle embedded in the form of class redefinition and materialism in the Classical Age. The science used by Schiller is also class-conscious, for the 'gift of nature' combined with the 'genetic' theory restrict the possibility of successful aesthetic education to a very small class of intellectuals who are also noblemen and aristocrats. As such, the middle and lower classes are *a priori* deprived of the possibility of reaching an aesthetic understanding of themselves and the world. The nature of the 'leap', unlike Hegel's self-awareness, is rather Kantian insofar as it occurs within individual consciousness, and as such it is extremely arbitrary and subjective. It does not allow for the full operation of the 'interactive' nature of aesthetic knowledge to emerge. Self-awareness becomes the product of a 'given' cultural and moral milieu, also restricted to the 'given' class of intellectuals

and artists.

The Kantian roots of Schiller's theory of freedom can best be seen in Schiller's definition of 'beauty as freedom' developed in answer to Kant's theory of Aesthetics. For Schiller, 'beauty' is not as Kant conceived it, that is, as the point of view of its effect on man as purely subjective and one-dimensional perception,<sup>36</sup> but as an attribute of the 'object' regarded as appearance. In *Kallias* Schiller states that "beauty is nothing but freedom in appearance."<sup>37</sup> In the first instance, beauty is "freedom in appearance" insofar as it is the impression that one is left with when faced with a beautiful object, i.e. the "miraculous air of independence and casual indifference towards its surrounding circumstances and conditions under which it came into being;"<sup>38</sup> hence its capacity to surpass its own limitations and render obsolete the very notion of finitude. Beauty resides in the very nature of the soul it inhabits, it exists through a rule which it has given to itself.<sup>39</sup> As such "purposefulness, order, proportion, perfection -qualities which have so long been identified with beauty- have absolutely nothing to do with it; except where these qualities belong to the nature of the object."<sup>40</sup> The beauty of the aesthetic object resides in its capacity to master its own technical attributes and use its technical form as a "kind of foil" to its own freedom, "so that its beauty, which consists in freedom, appears as a *tour de force* achieved in spite of its technical form."<sup>41</sup> Beauty is freedom insofar as it is the *overcoming* of its *negation*: "The negative concept of freedom is conceivable only through the positive concept of its opposite, and just as the idea of natural causality is necessary in order to introduce us to the idea of free will, so the idea of technical form is necessary in order to introduce us to freedom in the kingdom of appearances."<sup>42</sup> Freedom, as beauty or the overcoming of limitations, is therefore the positive *recognition* of *non-freedom* as limitation and encapsulment in finitude. It demands a yielding to limitation, a recognition whose ultimate negation is the expression of the free will, where the latter's actualisation can only then be called freedom.

In moral terms, beauty is 'Truth', or more specifically, sense-perception to Virtue; it encapsulates moral feelings and dispositions which are the foundations of reasoned and reasonable actions.<sup>43</sup> "A moral action becomes a beautiful action only when it resembles a spontaneous effect of nature. In a word: a free action is a beautiful action, when autonomy of mind and autonomy in appearance coincide." According to Schiller, "moral beauty," (*moralische schönheit*), "appears only when duty has become second nature."<sup>44</sup> Just as the internalisation of the technique for the

aesthetic object becomes the very essence of its freedom, so the assimilation of duty as second nature constitutes the expression of moral freedom. The analogy between beauty as "freedom in appearance," and freedom in the social world ends in morality. Freedom is no longer the freedom of the absolute, but is concrete freedom the actualisation of which coincides with the will and inner nature of the individual. For Schiller, it is in human nature to "object to seeing compulsion anywhere, even when it is exercised by reason itself; we desire also that the freedom of nature shall be respected, because in aesthetic judgment we regard each being as an end in itself..."<sup>45</sup>

In moral freedom Schiller comes very close to Hegel's theory on synthesis between two opposing elements, the particular and the universal. Freedom as the overcoming of opposition begins first with recognition of the negation, not in terms of elimination, but as a positive actuality the negation of which constitutes the identification of the *form* which freedom may take in order to actualise itself in the world. Hegel would object to this, because for Schiller freedom remains subjective, a mere dialogue within the self. In order for this freedom to become actual, Hegel demands that it becomes inter-subjective, and hence social. There has to be therefore a moment when freedom is able to recognise and admit to the freedom of another subject in the universal or objective order. However, Hegel would concede that Schiller has already in 'negation' recognised the first step towards freedom's actualisation. Schiller's theory would remain purely in the negative because no social 'other' has been identified. Aesthetics, as the theory of knowledge, does not provide a nucleus in which freedom of the will may find true expression; in it freedom finds its essence as the negation of non-freedom, reconciliation and actualisation thereby remain in suspension. In fact, Schiller provides a clear depiction of the moment in consciousness when freedom and servitude are facing each other as polar opposites in a state of *Aufmerksamkeit*, mutual recognition. A bi-polarity which is recognised by Hegel as the opposition of 'individuality' to 'particularity', and of 'quantity' to 'quality' undertaken by the Romantics, but which does not lead to reconciliation. This is also the opposition which Hegel recognised as the reason responsible for the "madness" of his age. Hegel recognised this view of freedom from finitude as the contemplation of the aesthetic, the very element underlying the deep pessimism and irony of the Romantic age.

As Goethe foretold, the Romantics 'plundered' Schiller's theory on Aesthetic Education a year after its appearance in 'Die Hören' in 1795.<sup>46</sup> Following its publication, there was set up a "*System-programm des deutschen Idealismus*" which



elaborated and defined the Romantic understanding of Art, Science, Philosophy and proclaimed the aesthetic 'act' as the "highest act of reason;"<sup>47</sup> beauty as that of form was the Platonic Idea embracing all ideas. Poetry also claimed its position. Following from the Humanists' appreciation of the poetic language of Homer, poetry was considered as "what it was in the beginning -the teacher of mankind... which will supersede and outlive all the other arts and sciences."<sup>48</sup> This movement although basing its premises on Schiller's *Letters* altered his whole emphasis and intent. The Intuitive and Imaginative became enmeshed with the rational; the distinctions which were so carefully set-out by Schiller were 'confused' and to some extent completely discarded.<sup>49</sup> Aesthetic education came to mean an "innate," "given" *quality* of nature to which only the few could ascribe. It became the only distinguishing factor between those who could rule and those who should be guided by this type of new divinity. The notion of equality, also the basis for a quantitative measure of freedom, had to face this new affirmation of quality, considered "inexplicable and inalienable."<sup>50</sup> The Romantics held within their grasp a 'quality' that was to elevate them to the position of not merely moral and educational guides, Platonic Philosopher Kings, but also Christian Messiahs. They coveted the positions sought after by their Humanist ancestors, to be gods on earth and the light and hope for humanity.

In their struggle against the levelling power of 'equality', the Romantics fought against the rise of materialism and its generator, industrialisation. This struggle took on after 1848 the garb of what Marx and Engels defined as class struggle, but which was not as evident fifty years earlier. According to Georg Simmel, freedom as equality following the French Revolution came to be opposed by the Romantics who introduced inequality as a definition of emerging freedom.<sup>51</sup> On this Simmel commented that "as the ego had become sufficiently strengthened by the feeling of equality and generality, it fell back into the search for inequality."<sup>52</sup> The difference between the inequality of the new order compared with the old was that the former was self-imposed. Individualism, after liberating its identity from the rusty chains of guild, birth right, and Church, sought to establish a content of its own which was specific, irreplaceable and given.

Compared to Humanism, Romanticism's definition of the 'self,' the given *quality* of the soul, appeared to have finally established a content uniquely its own. Both intuition and clear reason combined in order to present the individual with elements, the juxtaposition of which allowed him/her to fulfill a double need: that of "enigmatic unfathomableness" and "unquestionable clarity," the divergence of which



was seen by Simmel to satisfy "one homogeneous need, in the idea of the ego and in the feeling of personality."<sup>53</sup> The ego's progress toward self-identification took the shape of one of two given states of socio-political existence. Either, the ego should in its journey towards selfhood discover that it is like the others and that in community it has its place there, or it should discover that "it may be strong enough to bear the loneliness of its own quality, and may hold that the only reason for a multitude of individuals to exist at all is the possibility of each component individual to measure his own incomparability and the individuality of his own world by those of the others."<sup>54</sup> This twofold recognition was experienced by most Romantics and harks back to Rousseau's enigmatic position in which the philosopher expressed an emphatic need at once to be at one with, and entirely isolated from, society.

Simmel defined the spirit which prevailed Romanticism as 'qualitative individualism' in contrast with 'quantitative equality' of the eighteenth century. He also labeled it 'uniqueness' [Einzigkeit] rather than 'singleness' [Einzelheit].<sup>55</sup> In its one spirit of empirical reason and intuition, Romanticism reflected the "inner rhythm of the incomparability, of specific claim, of the sharp qualitative differentiation of the single element, which the new individualism also sees in the social element, among the components of society."<sup>56</sup> Simmel acknowledges Romanticism as a child of its time, as the intellectual voice given to the constant flux caused by the redefinition of class barriers and the outcome of inner class struggle.

Lukács, who defined Romanticism as irrationalism, was equally aware of its nature as "reactionary answers to problems to do with class struggle."<sup>57</sup> This combination of reason and intuition wherein only confusion may reign lead Lukács to add that real freedom under irrationalism can only be a sham, for "in the eyes of reactionary bourgeoisie, one of irrationalism's most important tasks is to provide men with a philosophical 'comfort', the semblance of total freedom, the illusion of personal autonomy, moral and intellectual superiority - while maintaining an attitude that continually links them with the reactionary bourgeoisie in their real dealings and renders them absolutely subservient to it."<sup>58</sup> Romanticism appears so because of the very nature of its aspired freedom. The Romantics seem to have been struggling to maintain an illusion of infinity and divine quality during the age's success in effectively suppressing all bases for the maintenance of such divine hierarchy. Furthermore, the harder the Romantics struggled to achieve their Aesthetic freedom, the less free they seemed. The restrictive area according to which an individual may find ground to define his/her own uniqueness becomes so restricted that its very

definition appears as absence of freedom because it has taken the shape of flights of fancy and imagination. It is for this reason that "this individualism, which restricts freedom to a purely inward sense of the term, easily acquires an anti-liberal tendency. It thus is the complete antithesis of eighteenth century individualism, which, in full consistency with its notion of atomized and basically undifferentiated individuals, could not even conceive the idea of a collective as an organism that unifies heterogeneous elements."<sup>59</sup>

The Romantics' definition of freedom betrays the intellectuals' struggle against the socio-political order established at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The Romantics view their struggle as necessary, not merely to their own class - intellectual and artistic - but also to the rest of humanity. They combined in their work the divine aspirations of the Humanists, and the empirical, probing of scientific rationality. The lines between divinity and science are blurred here, and the result is an uneasy co-existence with the type of liberty that emerged in-the-world since the French Revolution. This Part sought to distinguish the various elements, threads that history, since the end of the Middle Ages, has woven into intricate tapestry relating the story of the struggle for freedom and individualism. It has meant to establish the argument stating that our definition of freedom today cannot be disassociated from its past forms, and that perhaps in the very expressions we use to define our will to freedom, there lay the historical elements which established its nature and content.

If this Part dealt with the elements defining the projects of freedom of centuries past, Part II deals with modernity in terms of the present. First, in chapter I, it outlines Hegel's critique of Romanticism, and his elaboration of a theory of freedom the practice of which is illustrated in the *Philosophy of Right*. Second, in chapter II, it outlines the kind of freedom that leading intellectuals perceived as having come into being. For this purpose, two twentieth century authors have been chosen, Max Weber and Alasdair MacIntyre. The work of the first defines -in sociological terms- the type of freedom that became possible in early twentieth century capitalist society. The second, is a critique of the first. Together they combine to present effectively the dilemma of the modern age, depicted as humanity's failure to achieve freedom and subjectivity in modern society. The similarities and differences noted in the discussion of Weber's and MacIntyre's work with that of Hegel seek primarily to point out that Hegelian theory of liberty was not put in practice, and that, contrary to the claims made by postmodern authors (Part III), the modern age cannot be considered as 'Hegelian', nor would a critique of Hegel be considered as a viable

critique of modernity. This point is further discussed in Part III. Presently, it suffices to point out to the reader the particular differences which separate Hegelian *theory* from modern *practice*. To a study of Hegel and modernity we now turn.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup>Roy Porter (ed.), *Romanticism in National Context*, (Cambridge: 1988), pp. 109-111
- <sup>2</sup>Porter, *ibid.*, p. 113
- <sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 114
- <sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 109-133
- <sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 112
- <sup>6</sup>Frederick Garber (ed.), *Romantic Irony*, (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988), p. 45
- <sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 47
- <sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>10</sup>*The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1919, reprint 1992), p. 627
- <sup>11</sup>Garber, *op. cit.*, p. 45
- <sup>12</sup>Porter, *op. cit.*, p. 121
- <sup>13</sup>Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck (eds.) *The Complete Work of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, 10 vols., (London: Ernest Benn; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926-30), vol. 7, p. 274
- <sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 118
- <sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 123
- <sup>16</sup>Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria ... with his Aesthetical Essays*, J. Shawcross (ed.), 2 Vols., (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907), vol. 1, p. 202.
- <sup>17</sup>M.H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature*, (New York: Norton, 1971), p. 47.
- <sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 334
- <sup>19</sup>Irving Babbitt, *Rousseau & Romanticism*, (Austin & London: University of Texas Press, 1919, reprint 1947, 1977), p. 18
- <sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 19
- <sup>22</sup>Ernest Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Enlightenment*, (Princeton: 1951)
- <sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 346
- <sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>25</sup>Insofar as it produced two very distinct fields of artistic expression; viz. philosophical and poetic, a fact of which Schiller was personally aware and for which often criticised for some of the effects of his philosophical work inhibited his artistic production; for more detail cf. Schiller's letters to Goethe.
- <sup>26</sup>E.M. Wilkenson and L.A. Willoughby, *Introduction to Schiller's On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), p. xxv
- <sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, p. xxxii
- <sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, p. xxxiii
- <sup>30</sup>For e.g. Diderot, the Philosophes, Hume, Rousseau, Herder, German Psychologists and Logicians such as Tetens and Lambert, in the wake of Leibniz, took the creation of art as a paradigm of the general formative activity of the human mind - they all in different ways helped to replace the image of the psyche as a unity and discontinuity.
- <sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, Letter XIX.
- <sup>32</sup>Letter XXXVI.1; XX.1; XIX.2. This mention of 'fortune' harks back to the Humanist belief in the power of *Fortuna*, an element that no individual has a power or control over.
- <sup>33</sup>Vom Erkennen und Empfinden der Menschlichen Seele, J.G.Herder, [1778]; cited in Wilkenson, *ibid.*, p. liii.
- <sup>34</sup>Schiller, *ibid.*, XXVII.12
- <sup>35</sup>Georg Lukács, *The Young Hegel*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, (London: Merlin, 1975), p. 203.
- <sup>36</sup>Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, trans. John t. Goldthwait, (University of California Press, 1960).
- <sup>37</sup>[Schönheit also ist nichts anderes, als Freiheit in der Erscheinung]; cited in R.D.Miller,

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*Schiller and the Ideal of Freedom*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970); p. 89

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 90

<sup>39</sup>[es ist durch eine Regel, die es sich selbst gegeben hat]; cited in Miller, *ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 92

<sup>43</sup>Schiller, *op. cit.*, Letter XXV

<sup>44</sup>cited in Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 98; wir wollen nun einmal nirgends Zwang sehen, auch nicht, wenn die Vernunft selbst ihn ausübt; auch die Freiheit der Natur wollen wir respektiert wissen weil wir jedes Wesen in der ästhetischen Beurteilung als einen Selbstzweck betrachten.

<sup>46</sup>Wilkenson, *op. cit.*, Goethe commented quite ironically "they'll oppose him now, I'm afraid; but in a few years they'll be plundering him without acknowledgement", p. cxxxiii.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. clxiii

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>This can be seen in the multiplicity of projects undertaken by the pre-marxist socialists of the late 18th and early 19th century in France and Britain; to name only a few: fourier, Cabet, Saint-Simon, and Owen, among others, whose projects aimed to create a community wherein all men and women were equal in dress and behaviour; such communities quickly degenerated into anarchy and even violence.

<sup>52</sup>Georg Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, trans. Kurt H. Wolff, (Illinois: Free Press, 1950), p. 78

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 79

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 81

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 81-82

<sup>57</sup>Georg Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason*, trans. Peter Palmer, (London: Merlin, 1980), p. 9

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 23

<sup>59</sup>Simmel, *op. cit.*, p. 82



**Part II: Modernity:  
Theory and Practice**

## Chapter I. Hegel's Enlightenment

If Renaissance philosophy sought to break down static Medieval social and political structures, nineteenth century philosophy, following the path paved by the Enlightenment tradition, sought to replace the old regime with a state structure which would attempt to ground the inherited conception of liberty in a constitution. Hegel's entire work, culminating in the *Philosophy of Right*, is intended to represent the age's attempt to render liberty an actuality. Hegel's theory of the state, presenting a system in which the acceptance of tradition and custom was to restore freedom to humanity, appeared at a time when the overthrow of the state as the symbol of oppression was all encompassing. Faced with the extreme stance of the Romantic movement of his time, one may see Hegel's work as an urgent message seeking to instill reason in a world bent on destruction and irrationalism. However, Hegel's philosophy, advocating the 'here and now' as a rational actuality, failed to capture the imagination in spite of its adherence to a radical concept of freedom. Freedom, as actualisation in the objective sphere (social and political realm), could not find any reconciliation with a humanity whose disillusionment with the objective world defined its freedom as the latter's absolute negation. Hegel was aware of this. In the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, for instance, he complained bitterly against empiricists, reactionaries and philosophers belonging to the Romantic movement whose attacks were levelled at the state in the name of freedom and Reason. Hegel's objection was based upon his belief that this negative definition of freedom,<sup>1</sup> expressed in philosophical language and context, impeded the recognition of Reason as the actualisation of social and political freedom. For Hegel, freedom could only be an inter-subjective life-world experience and not merely, as some empiricists would argue, a solitary enjoyment of the senses.

It is the purpose of this chapter to point out two fundamental points regarding Hegel's philosophy. First, it will be argued against current interpretations,<sup>2</sup> that Hegel's concept of freedom does not attempt to justify the philosophical movement of the time, i.e. the rationalisation of liberty in terms of the Enlightenment tradition, but to respond to the ideological contradictions expressed in Romanticism. Second, Hegel's philosophy and his concept of freedom are not Romantic. Rather, they express acute awareness of this movement's problematic nature and influence, and provide a definition of freedom that would do away with the 'negative' character of the Romantic movement. Hegel's 'Concept of Freedom' presents a response, indeed an alternative to Romanticism's 'unactualisable' project. To this end this chapter is

divided in three sections. Section 1 identifies the nature of Hegel's critique of Romanticism. It presents this critique on three levels, viz. interpretation of the classics, understanding of the role of religion and definition of Reason. The exposition of this critique permits the articulation of certain elements of Hegel's theory that are necessary for this work. These include Hegel's definition of actuality, Reason, Becoming as mediation, and self-consciousness. Section 2 discusses Hegel's concept of the Notion and Teleology as presented in the *Science of Logic*. Finally, section 3 outlines Hegel's definition of the 'concept of freedom' as the *will* and its 'practical' application in the *Philosophy of Right*.

### *Hegel's Critique of Romanticism*

In his letter to Schelling of 2 November 1800, Hegel described his own intellectual activities of years past:

In my scientific development, which started from [the] more subordinate needs of man, I was inevitably driven towards science, and the ideal of [my] youth had to take the form of reflection and thus at once a system. I now ask myself, while I am still occupied with it, what return to intervention in the life of men can be found..."<sup>3</sup>

Hegel's preoccupation with the "subordinate needs of man" included topics on politics, aesthetics and religion which concerned his private writings, first published in this century by Hermann Nohl under the title *Early Theological Writings*. There his "ideal of youth" was projected in his study of pagan, essentially Roman and Hellenistic, way of life whose religion united in harmony the 'subjective' and the 'public'. Indeed, like the Romantics of his time, Hegel was equally interested in pagan philosophy, viewing it as an early moment of 'wholeness', where individuals were indistinguishable from the whole. However, unlike the Romantics, Hegel did not believe that we can regain this 'wholeness' by 'taking flight' from the present. Rather, Hegel advocated a 'wholeness' that the Greeks were unable to conceive of, that is the product of a free, rational and conscious decision to be one with the objective order.

Far from opposing the masses bent on the destruction of the archaic objective order expressed in religion, Hegel's *Early Theological Writings* conclude that the loss of self suffered as a result of social dissolution is both embodied in, and perpetuated

by, prevailing religious ideas and conduct. Hegel makes distinctions between *objective* and *subjective* religion, as well as between *positive* and *natural* religion. In the *Tübingen Essay of 1793* Hegel is critical of the form that the religion of his time has taken, defining it as 'objective religion' which has separated itself from the very function it meant to perform, i.e. bringing in harmony the particular and the universal.<sup>4</sup> According to Hegel, 'objective religion' is a doctrine which belongs to the life-world in which it is preserved in outward experience, social norms and historical discourse, but not one with which individuality is able to identify itself. 'Objective religion' poses itself as a transcendent beyond. It identifies the 'self' in terms which do not constitute individual experience in the world. It maintains its hold on its subjects through social norms and custom long after belief in the doctrine has passed. This contradiction between subjective belief and objective order comes to naught when social and political disintegration is imminent. Under such circumstances objective religious norms would subsist only through the use of coercive force or a specific form of 'superstition', a spiritlessness which Hegel terms 'fetishism'.<sup>5</sup>

Hegel distinguished further between subjective and objective religion within the context of *Volksreligion*, folk religion, which he deemed as the true objectified spirit of inward subjective morality, which he recognised as belonging to the earlier form of 'unconscious' or 'natural' wholeness. He recognised folk religion as the "embodiment of the shared life animating people who participate in a common history and enjoy ethical and cultural consensus."<sup>6</sup> In folk religion, subjective religion "is alive, is effective in the inwardness of our being, and is active in our outward behavior. Subjective religion is fully individuated," whereas "objective religion is abstraction,"<sup>7</sup> i.e. formal. *Volksreligion* is Hegel's idealised image of the life enjoyed by the Greeks, when the individual and the objective order blended in a unified whole. It is what "generates and nourishes noble dispositions," and "goes hand in hand with freedom," whereas the prevailing religion of his own day:

aims to educate men to be citizens of heaven whose gaze is ever directed thither so that human feelings become alien to them. At our greatest public festival, one draws near to enjoy the heavenly gifts, in a garb of mourning and with lowered gaze-at the festival, which ought to be the feast of universal brotherhood, many a man is afraid he will catch from the common cup the venereal infection of the one who drank before him, so that his mind is not attentive, not occupied with holy feelings, and during the function itself he must reach into his pocket and lay his offering on the plate.<sup>8</sup>

Hegel's critique of the religious spirit of late-eighteenth-century Germany is present in the discussion on 'positive religion'. In the *Positivity of Christian Religion*, Hegel contrasts 'positive religion' to 'natural religion', and states that "positive religion is a contranatural or a supernatural one, containing concepts and information transcending understanding and reason and requiring feelings and actions which would not come naturally to men: the feelings are forcibly and mechanically stimulated, the actions are done to order or from obedience without any spontaneous interest."<sup>9</sup> Hegel's view on *positive* religion highlights its capacity to separate, rather than reconcile, the subject from the objective order. It also promotes and maintains the alienation of *subject* from *self* in its very capacity to impose rather than stimulate subjective compliance. 'Natural religion', on the other hand, is seen by Hegel to contain the elements of synthesis between the subjective and objective orders. However, it is incapable of revealing the spirit of the Supreme Being, because the synthesis here is arbitrary, a given in which *distinctions* between the subjective realm and the objective order have not yet come into being. In other words, individual consciousness as such is not present in natural religion, and this is because individuality is itself distinct from particularity. For Hegel, the individual is already a product of synthesis between the particular and the universal.<sup>10</sup> It is only in revealed religion that this distinction is possible. It is possible because the moment of negation, or individuality, provides the elements for consciousness to become aware of itself and the world. For Hegel then, only revealed religion is capable of unveiling the full truth. This is because Hegel saw revealed religion as the historical product of natural religion, objectified in life-world structures, doctrines and scriptures. The coming into being of revealed religion's positivity appears "when another mood awakens," and once human nature at any given time in history "begins to have a sense of itself and thereby to demand freedom in and for itself instead of placing it in its supreme Being, then and only then can its former religion begin to appear a positive one."<sup>11</sup>

The consciousness resulting from this recognition of positivity is one which permits the actualisation of a higher level of freedom. It is a level of consciousness that is superior to consciousness present in both 'natural' and 'positive' religion. This is because the awareness of the subject of its subjectivity and position within the objective order occurs, for Hegel, through a higher level of reflective consciousness of the self by itself in and through the 'other', i.e. objective world. In this moment, consciousness transcends both purely subjective and purely objective spheres, which



is equally an overcoming of opposition and synthesis. This makes clear that for Hegel, true freedom could not have been present in the Greek world, and is equally lacking in positive religion. Hegel viewed the Romantic revolt against the positivity of the religion of the day as the affirmation of the beginning of self-consciousness expressing individuals' need to be one with their belief, i.e. to acquire a sense of 'wholeness'. This 'wholeness' is nevertheless different from that of natural religion in so far as it is made by choice and not arbitrary, and that its presence in the objective order is actual<sup>12</sup> rather than abstracted, i.e. that 'wholeness' exists in the objective world as a rational, and hence actualisable state.

Hegel illustrates how religion succeeds in helping individuals gain consciousness of themselves, as individuals and not as particulars, in his account of Abraham's experience of God. In the *Spirit of Christianity and its Fate*, Hegel illustrates the negative moment of alienation by analysing how Abraham's goal of human striving toward reconciliation with reality, which he took to be the transcendent Lord, separated him from nature. In following the precepts of his Lord, Abraham was forced to separate himself from his social, natural world, and eventually from his own sense of self. Consequently, "mastery" became "the only possible relationship in which Abraham could stand to the infinite world opposed to him," but being "unable himself to make this mastery actual, it therefore remained ceded to his Ideal."<sup>13</sup> As Abraham "himself also stood under his Ideal's domination, ... he served the Idea, and so he enjoyed his Ideal's favor; and since its divinity was rooted in his contempt for the whole world, he remained its only favorite."<sup>14</sup> Thus, Abraham became alien to his own nature, opposing everything which connected him with his reality - a faithful nomad, who "was a stranger on earth, a stranger to the soil and to men alike. Among men he always was a foreigner."<sup>15</sup> In this discussion, Hegel demonstrated that, although the first moment in revealed religion was the separation of the self from its own essence, it was so only for the purpose of entering into the moment of the 'self', becoming conscious of its 'self' as consciousness. This moment of consciousness of the self's subjectivity and its essence present in the objective order was none other than that: a moment in history, a moment in the evolution toward the unity of particulars and their reconciliation with the whole.

Hegel believed that Abraham's faith accentuated the opposition between humanity and nature, individual and society, alienating him further from his true sense of self. In its extreme form, positive Christian religion operated very much in the same way, i.e. as it posited the impossibility of the individual's reconciliation

with the objective order as part of human existence, it promoted a definite clash between Reality and Ideality thereby negating the very essence of *Volksreligion*. According to Jean Hyppolite, for Hegel, Judaism

poses essence beyond existence and God outside of man. By recognizing the duality of the extremes, I stand with the nonessential. I am merely nothingness; my essence is transcendent. But that my essence is not in me but posed outside of me necessarily entails an effort on my part to rejoin myself so as to free myself from nonessence. Human life, thus, is an unceasing effort to attain itself. But this effort is futile, because immutable consciousness is posed as transcendent *a principio*.<sup>16</sup>

In his analysis of the Abrahamic faith and the positive spirit of Christianity, Hegel was acutely aware of the nature of disillusionment of the Romantics of his age. They expressed the failure of the self to attain its essence due to the eclipse of God as its transcendent Other. After the French Revolution, a distinct separation between Church and civil society became evident, leaving the individual to shoulder the responsibility of defining human nature in the void left by the negation of the divine. The Romantics protested against the void left by the Church, and sought to replace the Christian God with a Nature that was viewed as Absolute. Nietzsche's cry "God is dead" should not be considered simply as a heretical revolt, but also, and more importantly, as a lamentation. According to Camus, Nietzsche was able to seize upon the nature of the disillusionment of the age, defining its nihilistic spirit in terms of an 'apocalypse to come'.<sup>17</sup> Nietzsche expressed the Romantic revolt as "the inability to believe and the disappearance of the primitive foundation of all faith—namely the belief in life."<sup>18</sup> For Camus, Nietzsche posed a question to which Hegel had already sought to provide the answer, namely, "can one live believing in nothing?"<sup>19</sup> To this Nietzsche answered in the affirmative on the condition that one should create a system out of the absence of faith, and accept the final consequences of nihilism, i.e. when emerging into the empty desert of the objective order, one should feel and suffer one's freedom with the same intensity as one does both pain and joy.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Hegel's philosophy, contrary to Romanticism, sought a solution in which a consciousness of self and of the objective universal (other) was no longer alienating but uniting. It sought to find this solution in a state of social and political harmony, where social and personal fragmentation could be avoided. This would occur through the replacement of the objective order with a political association in which individuals could live as social and rational beings whose subjective identity (essence) was not opposed to their social and political existence. However, unlike Nietzsche,

Hegel believed that Reason is capable of providing humanity with such a solution, for he did not equate Reason with empirical science.

In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel questions the logic used by Romantic philosophers who criticise the state in their understanding of the nature of reason, reason in nature, as well as the manner in which these two notions are conceived. He does this with a view to alter the order of things on the social and political levels, and shift all that is public to the private sphere in the name of the "idea that freedom of thought, and of mind generally, evinces itself only in divergence from, indeed in hostility to, what is publicly recognized."<sup>21</sup> In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel demonstrates that *reason* is *freedom*, and that this freedom is the affirmation of the individual will in society through the medium of an objective 'other' which resides in the ethical world, or more commonly, the constitution of the state. In other words, reason symbolises the unity between the particular (citizen) and the universal (State), or 'individual', in the social and political matrix. Reason in nature, as the Romantics claim, is present at its most rudimentary stage. For Hegel, reason in nature is a potentiality that has not been expressed through individual *will* and is not yet conscious of itself nor the 'other' which resides outside it. For Hegel, the Romantics "grant that it is nature as it is which philosophy has to bring within its ken, that the philosopher's stone lies concealed somewhere within nature itself, that nature is inherently rational, and that what knowledge has to investigate and grasp in concepts is this actual reason present in it; not the formations and accidents evident to the superficial observer, but nature's eternal harmony, its harmony, however, in the sense of the law and essence imminent within it."<sup>22</sup> Hegel contends that in this definition, reason is not uniting but separating, not communal but private, not evolved and self-conscious, but limited and material bound. The concept of reason in nature ignores the evolution in social and political history, and leads its proponents to believe that "a special and original" theory of the state ought to be discovered and promulgated, suggesting that "no state or constitution had ever existed in the world at all or was even in being at the present time."<sup>23</sup> Hegel objects to this understanding of reason which denies that the objective social order (ethical sphere) has "achieved power and mastery" through reason, and that it is by reason that it "maintains itself and has its home there."<sup>24</sup>

Reason as inherent in nature presents further problems. For Hegel, as illustrated in the *Theological Writings*, reason is the *overcoming* of oppositions through the lengthy process (in history) of the coming-into-being of consciousness of

the individual of the elements (subjective and objective) which make up the social world. By contrast, Romantic reason, or reason as the "law and essence" of the "harmony" in nature suggests that *knowledge*, and hence *certainty* regarding human existence and relationships, appears only through the subjective understanding of each individual. Knowledge and reason thereby become a given (since everyone is essentially part of nature and partakes of the reason inherent within it) and do not depend on a process of becoming, or coming-into-being. Consequently, the knowledge of 'objective' truth appears difficult because as the "universe of mind" (i.e. reason as it actualises itself in the element of self-consciousness) is left "to the mercy of chance and caprice," the ethical world is emptied of its 'objective' content, and becomes "Godless."<sup>25</sup> Truth as 'objective' certainty would lie outside it because it has become subjective truth and nothing else.<sup>26</sup> Truth becomes 'my' truth, and not a set of laws according to which all citizens within a state should abide. Thus conceived, truth makes difficult the actualisation of the individual will in the objective sphere, for in so far as it may vary from one individual to the next, truth itself, as impassive and immutable, would not exist.

The Romantics understand truth in terms of what *is*, whereas Hegel conceives truth as Notion, or conception of truth. Similarly, the Romantics conceive of truth as what is 'real', whereas Hegel prefers to call it 'actual'. The Romantics speak of 'perception' of the truth, and Hegel defines it as 'unfolding'. Hegel argues that the Romantics commit the error of discounting the importance of 'unfolding' because they concentrate on what *is*. In the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*., Hegel refers to the Romantics' method of ascertaining Truth as:

[t]he more conventional opinion [which] gets fixated on the antithesis of truth and falsity ... It does not comprehend the diversity of philosophical systems as the progressive unfolding of truth, but rather sees in it simple disagreements. The bud disappears in the bursting-forth of the blossom, and one might say that the former is refuted by the latter; similarly, when the fruit appears, the blossom is shown up in its turn as a false manifestation of the plant, and the fruit now emerges as the truth of it instead.<sup>27</sup>

This is what is loosely called 'empirical', or 'scientific' truth. Hegel condemns this form of knowledge because in its 'anti-thetical' approach it fails to contain, or acknowledge, mediation. Hegel defines mediation as "nothing beyond self-moving selfsameness, or is reflection into self."<sup>28</sup> Hegel would say that Abraham's first moment of alienation consists in his knowledge of himself as separate from both



nature and other individuals. Abraham's consciousness of his alien nature is a 'reflection' of God, or God's qualities. Mediation is, therefore, for Hegel the "'I', or *becoming* in general," or "is just immediacy in the process of becoming, and is the immediate itself."<sup>29</sup> According to Hegel, reflection is a necessary part of the dialectic of truth since it consists of a "positive moment of the Absolute."<sup>30</sup> It is in his moment of reflection, i.e. alienation, that Abraham identifies himself as subject, hence as a "moment of the Absolute."<sup>31</sup>

Hegel states that it "is reflection that makes the True a result, but it is equally reflection that overcomes the antithesis between the process of its becoming and the result, for this becoming is also simple, and therefore not different from the form of the True which shows itself as *simple* in its result; the process of becoming is just this return into simplicity."<sup>32</sup> Here, Hegel is describing what in fact occurs behind the 'appearance' of 'simplicity'. That is, he claims that for Reason to be properly 'understood', it must be considered in its dialectical form, i.e. capable of perceiving the movement underlying 'simple appearances'. Reason cannot be based, as the Romantics perceive it, on "intuition" or on "immediate knowledge of the Absolute, religion or being."<sup>33</sup> Therefore, to the Romantics Hegel answers in the affirmative that the "True is the whole," but argues that the whole "is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development."<sup>34</sup> However, this cannot occur without the "purposive activity" implied in the Notion of "development,"<sup>35</sup> or *becoming*.

Hegel's critique of Romanticism stems from his use of the dialectical method which deals with the development of "isness" into "nothingness"<sup>36</sup> and vice versa. This movement permits the identification of a third category, *becoming*. It identifies the passage of nothing into being (origination) and the passage of being into nothing (decease).<sup>37</sup> Hegel's critique of the Romantics is based on their reluctance to perceive an identity between the 'isness' and 'nothingness', the finite and infinite. Because the Romantics perceive a separation between finitude and infinity, they attempt to overcome the first by 'being' or positing themselves in terms of the second. As they perceive the 'infinite' in terms of 'God', hence in terms of other-worldly experience, they seek to establish this divine quality through imagination and dreams. However, this attainment of 'infinity' is not a moment that is grounded in 'consciousness' as an 'isness', but "is related to a twofold antithetic essence; it is in its own self a contradiction, and is distraught in its inmost being."<sup>38</sup> This occurs because in order for the 'living' authors of the Romantic movement to be 'infinite',



they must negate the very essence of their existence. The dialectic they would use must contain not one, but two antithetical moments. The first moment is that of self-negation (against finitude), and the second is a negation of the world (against *being* in general). This occurs because imagination and other forms of other-worldly experience, as Sartre would later illustrate,<sup>39</sup> makes necessary a break with both the self and the world. Indeed, for Hegel, the Romantics' use of antithetical categories forces them to view themselves as either finite, or infinite, but never both. Hegel states that this moment of twofold antithesis "reveals itself to be this inner perversion of itself, to be a deranged consciousness which finds that its essential being is immediately non-essential, its reality immediately an unreality."<sup>40</sup> Reflecting on the state of mental agitation afflicting the Romantics of his age, Hegel concludes, that their need to be both 'infinite' while consistently rejecting their 'finiteness' may eventually drive them to "madness."<sup>41</sup>

In the following, I shall point out the adverse consequences that Hegel acknowledges to be the result of the Romantics understanding of Reason as empirical knowledge. First, for Hegel, the Romantics use 'intuition' to perceive God, but use Reason - empirical and scientific - to ground this knowledge into reality, i.e. to act according to God's will on earth. Consequently, God is posited in an equivocal fashion. On the one hand, God is posited as the Absolute Subject, other-worldly, remote and inaccessible, but on the other, God is also knowable. Hegel argues that such positing is "*meaningless*," because "what is posited is not a being [i.e. something that merely *is*], or essence, or a universal in general, but rather something that is reflected into itself, a Subject."<sup>42</sup> Hegel adds that this positing of Absolute Subject is faulty as the very action of 'positing' makes of the Notion of Absolute Subject an impossible 'actuality', "for the anticipation posits the subject as an inert point, whereas actuality is self-movement."<sup>43</sup> By this Hegel means to point out that to perceive God through intuition cannot be compatible with knowing God through purely empirical Reason (i.e. a reason based on antithesis). Both means express the Romantics' distinction between the finite and infinite, and their inability to perceive any form of mediation. In employing these methods they merely posit God as a fixed and non-developing notion, which is essentially contradictory to the idea that God is Absolute will. Hegel would argue that because the Romantics are incapable of conceiving of their reality in terms of 'actuality', i.e. in terms of 'becoming', they are blind to the fact that they are both finite and infinite. For Hegel, all rational beings partake of this dialectic. He maintains that infinity is not the privilege of the 'divine' soul, as the Romantics would have it, but the state of all those capable of reflecting on

the nature of the categories. Hegel defines the Romantics' wish to constitute the expression of the "heart-throb for the welfare of humanity," as "passing into the ravings of an insane self-conceit, into the fury of consciousness to preserve itself from destruction; and it does this by expelling from itself the perversion which it is itself, and by striving to look on it and express it as something else."<sup>44</sup>

Second, Hegel is critical of the Romantics' conception of self-consciousness. The Romantics' understanding of Reason as empirical knowledge, or knowledge as sense-certainty, represents for Hegel "the most abstract and poorest *truth*," for "all that it says about what it knows is just that it *is*; and its truth contains nothing but the sheer *being* of the thing [Sache]."<sup>45</sup> Hegel states that what is lacking in sense-certainty is the acknowledgement of *immediacy* and *mediation*.<sup>46</sup> Hegel contends that sense-certainty is based on the distinction which occurs immediately between the perceiver, the 'I', and the perceived, the 'object'. Sense-certainty is aware of the object in terms of a 'This' that is 'not-I'. However, this knowledge is never immediate, but is mediated through something else, the other. This type of knowledge is equally true of consciousness, for consciousness is aware of the truth *through* the recognition and overcoming of the *untruth*.<sup>47</sup> Consciousness is both reflection and distinction,<sup>48</sup> and is also the moment of the coming-into-being of self-consciousness. Deprived of mediation, the Romantics' approach to self-consciousness from consciousness is thereby limited. For Hegel, the first moment of self-consciousness is consciousness, "and the whole expanse of the sensuous world is preserved for it, but at the same time only as connected with the second moment, the unity of self-consciousness with itself ..., i.e. it is *Desire* in general."<sup>49</sup> Self-consciousness is desire which satisfies its certainty *for itself* in the destruction of the "independent object."<sup>50</sup> As perpetual desire, self-consciousness is none other than a first moment of negation (i.e. consciousness as not-I), and can achieve its "*satisfaction only in another self-consciousness*."<sup>51</sup>

Hegel states that self-consciousness "exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged,"<sup>52</sup> or *recognised*. This moment of recognition is essential because "first, it has lost itself, for it finds itself as an *other* being; secondly, in doing so it has superseded the other, for it does not see the other as an essential being, but in the other sees its own self."<sup>53</sup> This process of recognition is of vital importance, for Hegel maintains that the process of self-knowledge through the other must be reciprocal, i.e. that the other must also be experiencing this process of self-consciousness through recognition.

On this Hegel states that self-consciousness "is aware that it at once is, and is not, another consciousness, and equally that this other is *for itself* only when it supersedes itself as being for itself, and is for itself only in the being-for-self of the other."<sup>54</sup> In this situation, "each is for the other the *middle term*, through which each *mediates* itself with itself and unites with itself; and each is for itself, and for the other, an *immediate* being on its own account, which at the same time is such only through this mediation. They *recognize* themselves as *mutually recognizing* one another."<sup>55</sup>

However, recognition is only the first moment of self-consciousness, for there remains the need to ground this consciousness of the self in reality, i.e. as determinate being. Self-consciousness continues to be *pure*, or *abstract* consciousness until it enters into "a life-and-death struggle,"<sup>56</sup> for until then it is *indeterminate* consciousness, a self-reflected consciousness into itself. Hegel argues that the two self-conscious individuals confronting each other "must engage in this struggle, for they must raise their certainty of being *for themselves* to truth, both in the case of the other and in their own case."<sup>57</sup> Only when both lives are preserved in an act of "negation coming from consciousness,"<sup>58</sup> does self-consciousness learn that "life is essential to it as pure self-consciousness."<sup>59</sup> However, the result of the struggle is not an identical form of self-consciousness, but one that is "pure self-consciousness," i.e. Lord, and a consciousness that is for another, "i.e. is a merely *immediate* consciousness, or consciousness in the form of *thinghood*,"<sup>60</sup> i.e. bondsman. Hegel argues that both moments are essential, "since to begin with they are unequal and opposed, and their reflection into a unity has not yet been achieved, they exist as two opposed shapes of consciousness; one is the independent consciousness whose essential nature is to be for itself, the other is the dependent consciousness whose essential nature is simply to live or to be for another."<sup>61</sup> Hegel states that both self-conscious individuals acted freely. The lord chose not to take away the bondsman's life, and the bondsman chose bondage to death. The bondsman appears to have simply delayed the affirmation of his *for-self*, and chose to become *for-another* as means to self-preservation. Hegel shows him capable of eventually turning the situation around, and becoming lord himself, in and through his ability to be *first* for-another, for in being so he is *also* being-for-self. This is possible, because in becoming the middle term necessary for the maintenance of the lord's being-for-self, the bondsman develops his self-consciousness through this mediation, for in it he constitutes all three moments. He is object for the lord, but is *also* <sup>62</sup>for-another to the lord, and a being-for-self vis à vis the 'object', however, only as a for-self that is *mediated* through a moment of being-for-another. The

bondsman cannot express pure *desire* vis à vis the object, i.e. annihilate it, but "only works on it."<sup>63</sup> Hegel recognises that it is only in *fear* that the bondsman is able to experience his own negativity, for fear drives him to exert himself in a *formative activity*, which becomes the *medium* of the *actualisation* of his being-for-self, the grounding of it in the objective order.<sup>64</sup>

For Hegel, the Romantics, like the Stoics, define freedom in terms of self-consciousness. This is possible insofar as consciousness "as the infinitude of consciousness or as its own pure movement, is aware of itself as essential being, a being which *thinks* or is a free self-consciousness."<sup>65</sup> Hegel adds that *thought* itself is not abstract, but is a *Notion* that is both a "picture-thought" and "something that *immediately is*."<sup>66</sup> In this sense, the *Notion* is itself distinct from simple thought insofar as it is "immediate and distinct unity"<sup>67</sup> of thought and being. Therefore, for the Romantics and Stoics, "in thinking, I *am free*, because I am not in an *other*, but remain simply and solely in communion with myself, and the object, which is for me the *essential* being, is in undivided unity my being-for-myself; and my activity in conceptual thinking is a movement within myself."<sup>68</sup> However, for Hegel, this type of freedom remains unactualised because it is "*indifferent* to natural existence and has therefore *let this equally go free*."<sup>69</sup> As "freedom in thought has only *pure thought* as its truth, a truth lacking in the fullness of life [, so] ... [f]reedom in thought, too, is only the *Notion* of freedom, not the living reality of freedom itself."<sup>70</sup> In maintaining this form, Hegel argues, self-consciousness as freedom is reduced to "*contentless thought*," whose *Notion* "as an abstraction cuts itself off from the multiplicity of things, and thus has no content *in its own self* but one that is *given* to it."<sup>71</sup>

Unlike the Stoics, however, the Romantics were able to ground this freedom in reality, (i.e. in art, science, etc.), but instead of making of freedom a *determinate* reality, they posited its actualisation in the *infinite*, thereby making use of a second negation.<sup>72</sup> By using the dialectic as "a negative movement,"<sup>73</sup> the Romantics caused to "vanish" both "objective reality," and their "relationship to it."<sup>74</sup> This form of consciousness is that of the "unconscious, thoughtless rambling which passes back and forth from the one extreme of self-identical self-consciousness to the other extreme of the contingent consciousness that is both bewildered and bewildering."<sup>75</sup> In itself, this Romantic self-consciousness is aware of this duality, but does not seek for it any synthesis. At one moment "it recognizes that its freedom lies in rising above all the confusion and contingency of existence, and at another time equally admits to a relapse into occupying itself with what is unessential. It pronounces an



absolute vanishing, but the pronouncement *is*, and this consciousness *is* the *vanishing* that is pronounced."<sup>76</sup> Hegel calls this the *Unhappy Consciousness*. It is "*unhappy, inwardly disrupted* consciousness, since its essentially contradictory nature is for it a *single* consciousness, must for ever have present in the one consciousness the other also; and thus it is driven out of each in turn in the very moment when it imagines it has successfully attained to a peaceful unity with the other."<sup>77</sup> The Romantics' unhappy consciousness, argues Hegel, *is* "the gazing of one self-consciousness into another, and itself *is* both, and the unity of both is also its essential nature," however, it is not as yet "explicitly aware that this is its essential nature, or that it is the unity of both."<sup>78</sup> The Romantics' unawareness of human nature as both "Changeable" and "Unchangeable," causes them to remain bound to this inner contradiction that is "merely the contradictory movement in which one opposite does not come to rest in its opposite, but in it only produces itself afresh as an opposite."<sup>79</sup>

According to Hegel, the Romantics, like the Humanists before them, employed Reason to instrumental and immediate ends. In separating Reason from the *end*, or *telos*, the Romantics were unable to overcome the duality of the consciousness of their existence in and through Reason, because they were unable to perceive of Reason as *mediation* in Nature, but only as subordinate and opposed to it. Freedom, for Hegel, must start in thought, and thought must be teleological. Therefore, before developing Hegel's 'Concept of Freedom' in section 3, it is imperative to define, briefly, what Hegel means by teleological reason, the end, and its actualisation. To this we now turn.

### *Teleology in Hegel's Logic*

In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel makes the distinction between 'Teleology' and 'Mechanism', and bases this distinction on the identification of the opposition between *causae efficientes* and *causae finales* -between efficient and final causes. Here, Hegel identifies a controversial view of the "absolute essence of the World," which is based upon either a "blind natural Mechanism," or an understanding which determines itself by its ends. Hegel links this antinomy to that of "fatalism or determinism and freedom."<sup>80</sup> Schiller's, and, later on, Romanticism's, Mechanism is fatalist in the sense that it does not manifest self-determination through the use of "efficient causes", i.e. it contains no expression of a free will.<sup>81</sup> It does so because it



posits its determinateness in the 'object' which lies outside it. In a direct sense, its product is not a finality in and for itself, rather it appears as the means to another end which is in itself finite. Teleology, on the other hand, is, in its own content, primary. It supposes a Notion which is determinate in and for itself, and "therefore, self-determining." Teleology makes a definite distinction between *form* and *content*, where the latter determines its unity. The teleological content cannot be finite, nor trivial. In its very nature teleological content is a totality which aims towards infinity.<sup>82</sup> The true essence of teleology may have been, and indeed for Hegel, was, trivialised by the Romantics through the positing of finite objectives (the pure 'I') as its end, thereby rendering it insignificant and even contemptible.<sup>83</sup> Due to the absolutist character of teleology, the positing of finite objects as an end will necessarily drive "a more universal thought ...[to] feel infinitely cramped or even nauseated"<sup>84</sup>. For Hegel, the very essence of freedom lies in the true infinite, rather than the immediate finite.<sup>85</sup>

Hegel develops the process of the synthesis between the Finite and Infinite in the third book of the *Science of Logic* in the chapter on Teleology. Hegel's structure of teleology resembles Kant's method in the third Critique, wherein the latter introduces a distinction between *relative* and *external* adequacy to an *end*.<sup>86</sup> According to Hegel, Kant's achievement lies in his introduction of the teleological theory of a reflecting faculty of judgement, thereby, making a connection between the universality of reason and subjective intuition. He also succeeds in distinguishing between the reflective universal faculty of reason and the determining faculty which allows him to consider the latter to merely subsume "the particular under the universal."<sup>87</sup> The subsuming nature of the universal is "an abstract which becomes concrete only in an other, the particular."<sup>88</sup> The end is therefore the "concrete universal which contains in itself the moment of particularity and externality, and consequently is active and is the impulse to repel itself from itself."<sup>89</sup> Kant succeeded in presenting the notion of 'life' or the Idea as the outcome of a syllogistic argument, wherein there exists a major premise, a minor premise and a conclusion. This is how Hegel defines the process of *end-realisation* which appears in terms of three stages of the *end*: Subjective end, the Means to the end, and end-actualisation. In this process the *end* is actualised through the *other*, through the means, hence, in externality; what allows this *other* to be subsumed in the universal is the reflective teleology of the subjective end, which is expressed through intentionality of the *Idea* of the *end*. This externality does not effect the nature of the telos, rather the relation between the telos, the subject, and the other constitute the "truth which is in and for

itself, which judges objectively and absolutely determines external objectivity."<sup>90</sup> The nature of the relation between the three factors is syllogistic, the outcome of which is necessarily internal, expressing an internal truth. For Hegel, "The End" is "the complementary third term of Mechanism and Chemism; it is their truth."<sup>91</sup>

The syllogistic argument of teleology is constructed in such a manner as to extend from the particular to the universal through the 'other'. In the centrality of the objective sphere, the concept of the subject discovers and posits the "negative point of unity."<sup>92</sup> Through the positing of objective realm as the "notion-determination," subjectivity has now posited its determinateness in externality, rendering its very unity as "self-repelling," while admitting a process of "self-preserving" unity.<sup>93</sup> This expresses the unity of opposites, or the unity of freedom and necessity. The end is here expressed as subjectivity's impulse towards external self-positing, which channels force and cause from accidental and opposing effects into the content which must be "reasonable" in its existence.<sup>94</sup> Its "reasonableness" is due to its capacity to express "the concrete notion which preserves the objective distinction in its absolute unity."<sup>95</sup> This unity of opposites by virtue of its own self-relation combines both "intro-reflection of form" and "individuality."<sup>96</sup> The nature of this reflection is "(1) Inner universality of the subject, and (2) Reflection outwards."<sup>97</sup> It is in this manner that the end remains subjective while its activity "is directed against external objectivity."<sup>98</sup> As the telos of the subject, the end is now "this total intro-Reflection of Objectivity, and is so immediately."<sup>99</sup> As objectivity, it is first posited as self-determination or particularity, distinct from the concrete form. It is also finite although it is posited as infinite subjectivity.<sup>100</sup> This is so due to the form it takes wherein the determinateness is expressed through objective indifference thereby acquiring the form of a "presupposition."<sup>101</sup> Its finite character is mainly associated with its need to express its objectivity in reality. The subject's need to express its objectivity renders its self-determining activity, or identity "immediately external to itself, and as much as it is intro-Reflection it is Reflection outwards."<sup>102</sup>

This subjective positing of the end contains an absolute negative unity, the overcoming of which presupposes the necessity to transcend the "positing of the negative as against the subject."<sup>103</sup> This positing, being the first step in the negation of the objective world, does not realise the end, but signifies the mean, the first step to the end. For its very realisation, the end requires a medium, "that is, a Mean, which at the same time has the shape of an external Determinate Being, indifferent to the End itself and to its realisation."<sup>104</sup> The mean represents the "formal middle of a

formal syllogism; it is external as against the extreme of the Subjective End, and consequently also against the extreme of the Objective End."<sup>105</sup> In its particularity, the nature of the mean is indifferent to the purpose it serves, its place can be taken by any other.<sup>106</sup> The mean is also a particularity only because "it is determinateness in relation to one extreme and universal in relation to the other,"<sup>107</sup> thereby rendering its very nature relative, i.e. expressed through others. The relationship between the means to the end is purely external, its only immediate relation is present in intro-Reflection found in the realm of the subject. Hence, the end remains at first as merely "external determinateness" in the means, and so it is realised outside it as a "negative unity."<sup>108</sup> The means itself is a "mechanical object" which is shaped by the end as a mere "determinateness and not as simple concretion of the totality."<sup>109</sup> The end, as an 'activity', and not a mere impulse or 'tendency', remains in need of an objective return to itself in order for it to acquire its totality.

Due to the external relationship of the means to the end, the process of realisation of the determinateness of the means will always be external to the end. It can only reach the objectivity of the end by transcending this externality through intro-Reflection. Hegel argues that the very nature of the means, as an activity which carries within it the Notion of the end, remains subjective unless this Notion reaches beyond subjectivity to include the universality and infinitude of the objective. The consistent presence of the Objective Notion in the two previous stages, (i.e., through the Subjective End expressed in intro-Reflection and the means posited by this End), ensures the realisation of the End through its Other, to which it is identical, and whose very embodiment is subsumed in the Notion. The product of the means, as external object, becomes the Objective Other, the identity of which is subsumed and transcended by the Objective Notion. For Hegel, the full realisation of the End through its identical Other cannot be the product of a finite Notion of Subjectivity. Rather, it is the product of a subjective activity within which the Objective, or Universal Notion, is necessarily present, and which in turn directs and shapes its *action*, hence its means. In this respect Hegel explains:

the subjectivity of the finite Notion contemptuously casts aside the Means - and, reaching its goal, has reached nothing better than this. But the reflection that the End is reached in the Means and that in the fulfilled End the Means and mediation are preserved, is the last result of the external End-relation, - a result which, after transcending itself, this relation has exhibited as its truth.<sup>110</sup>

This process of end-realisation represents the passage of "Subjectivity or Being-for-self of the Notion ... over into its Being-in-self or Objectivity."<sup>111</sup> In this process the Notion or the Idea determines itself in such a manner that its concreteness or particularity is external Objectivity, and its concrete unity is self-realisation. Within its very process of realisation lies the unity of opposites, where the identity of Objectivity is the simple Notion, hence immediate Objectivity. However, it is *at the same time* a process of mediation, and "is that simple immediacy only through the latter as self-transcending mediation."<sup>112</sup>

Hegel's theory of teleology develops the process of the overcoming of the dichotomy of the Romantic age in 'ideal' terms, and lays the ground to a different way of conceiving of Infinity and Finitude. Hegel had to go further in his philosophy and complete it by introducing a practical manual in which this process of synthesis may be made applicable. Unlike the Romantics, whose vision of their own 'quality' is that of possessors of the divine potentiality, i.e. Creativity, Hegel goes so far as to allow the different forces in society to gain a definite grasp of their reality and translate it into self-actualisation and lived freedom. This form of self-actualisation as freedom in the world is illustrated in the *Philosophy of Right*.

#### ***Hegel's 'Concept of Freedom' and the Philosophy of Right***

In the Introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel states that "the subject-matter of the philosophical science of right is the Idea of right, i.e. the concept of right together with the actualization of that concept."<sup>113</sup> More specifically, "the basis of right, is, in general, mind"<sup>114</sup> For Hegel, mind "has or rather makes consciousness its object: i.e. whereas consciousness is only the virtual identity of the ego with its other, the mind realizes that identity as the concrete unity which it and it only knows."<sup>115</sup> The mind is able to do so because it is governed by the principle explained above with relation to end-realisation, i.e. the principle of "all reason that the contents are at once potentially existent, and are the mind's own, in freedom."<sup>116</sup> Similarly, as with the idea of the Notion, the mind consists of a twofold aspect "-as *being* and as *its own*: by the one, the mind finds in itself something which *is*, by the other it affirms it to be only *its own*."<sup>117</sup> As form and consciousness, the mind is therefore both theoretical and practical. The mind is theoretical, insofar as it "has to do with the rational as its immediate affection which it must render its own: or it has to free knowledge from its pre-supposedness and therefore from its abstractness and



make the affection subjective."<sup>118</sup> The mind is practical as *will*, insofar as "its content is at first *only* its own, and is immediately willed."<sup>119</sup> Both aspects of the mind "reciprocally integrate themselves precisely because they are distinguished ... for both ... what is produced - though in different ways - is that which constitutes Reason, a unity of subjectivity and objectivity."<sup>120</sup> Therefore, to return to Hegel's definition of the concept of Right as 'generally mind', this would indicate that in the first instance, Hegel perceives the abstract notion of right as an interrelated activity of theoretical and practical mind, i.e. the moment when mind "confronts itself as free mind and thus gets rid of both its defects of one-sidedness,"<sup>121</sup> hence, when mind appears as free will.

Indeed, for Hegel, the mind's "precise place and point of origin is the will. The will is free, so that freedom is both the substance of right and its goal, while the system of right is the realm of freedom made actual, the world of mind brought forth out of itself like a second nature."<sup>122</sup> The will is the unity of two sides, an abstract, indeterminate side which "involves the dissipation of every restriction and every content either immediately presented by nature, by needs, desires, and impulses, or given and determined by any means whatever," which manifests "the unrestricted infinity of absolute abstraction or universality, the pure thought of oneself,"<sup>123</sup> and the determined side which commits "the transition from undifferentiated indeterminacy to the differentiation, determination and positing of a determinacy as a content and object."<sup>124</sup> Therefore the will is "particularity reflected into itself and so brought back to universality, i.e. it is individuality."<sup>125</sup> It is "the *self*-determination of the ego,"<sup>126</sup> and as such is free.

The first aspect of the will is considered by Hegel to be responsible for the Romantics' understanding of freedom as essentially negative. For they "regard thinking as one special faculty, distinct from the will ..., and ... contend that thinking is prejudicial to the will, especially the good will."<sup>127</sup> By restricting their will to the moment of negation, the Romantics seemed to lack the force of actualisation, or determination of the will. For Hegel, the moment of actualisation of the will requires "an object of the will that is at the same time also the dissipation of the restriction of the will."<sup>128</sup> This object is ultimately found in thought. For Hegel, "it becomes clear that it is only as thinking intelligence that the will is genuinely a will and free."<sup>129</sup> Or, "true liberty ... consists in the will finding its purpose in a universal content, not in subjective or selfish interest. But such content is only possible in thought and through thought."<sup>130</sup>



For Hegel, the proper object of the will is contained in the absolute universal or rational.<sup>131</sup> In its practical extent, the will must find its object in terms of the "principle of right, morality and all ethical life,"<sup>132</sup> which constitute the state. Indeed, for Hegel, "the absolute goal, or, the absolute impulse, of free mind is to make its freedom its object, i.e. to make freedom objective as much in the sense that freedom shall be the rational system of mind, as in the sense that freedom shall be the world of its immediate actuality. In making freedom its object, mind's purpose is to be explicitly, as Idea, what the will is implicitly. The definition of the concept of the will in abstraction from the Idea of the will is 'the free will which wills the free will'."<sup>133</sup> In the principle of right, morality and all ethical life, Hegel finds the embodiments of what would constitute for us, as citizens of the state, the objective order in which stands objectified, as it were, the object of the will as freedom. This is clear in Hegel's definition of the constitution of the state. As constitution, the dialectic of right, viz. the principle of right, moral and ethical worlds, appears as the actualisation of the science of right insofar as it defines and brings-into-being the elements necessary for the actions of the free will. To illustrate this, it is necessary to outline of the workings of the Hegelian state.

In the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel defines the object of his work: "This book, then, containing as it does the science of the state, is to be nothing other than the endeavor to apprehend and portray the state as something inherently rational. As a work of philosophy, it must be poles apart from an attempt to construct a state as it ought to be. The instruction which it may contain cannot consist in teaching the state what it ought to be; it can only show how the state, the ethical universe, is to be understood."<sup>134</sup> For Hegel, "the basis of the state is the power of reason actualizing itself as will."<sup>135</sup> The state is distinguished from civil society insofar as it is grounded in Reason, and as such is a power which craves the universal whether in the realm of thought or in the realm of ethics. By contrast, civil society, is a social and political arrangement wherein "each member is his own end, everything else is nothing to him. But except in contact with others he cannot attain the whole compass of his ends, and therefore these others are means to the end of the particular member."<sup>136</sup> Although ruled by a public authority, civil society has not yet attained the universality of a state in whose legal *constitution* is the actualisation of the *Idea* within which is to be found subsumed the elements of the moral and ethical precepts.

In §259 Hegel writes that "the Idea of the state has immediate actuality and is the individual state as a self - dependent organism - the *constitution* or *constitutional law*." Hegel's constitution determines the organisation of the state, and this includes the specification of the rights, duties, and activities of the citizens. The state, is organised in three basic powers: the determining power of the universal - the Legislature, the overcoming of particularities by the universal - the Executive, and the ultimate subjective power of the will - the Crown.<sup>137</sup> Although distinct in their function, all three powers are interrelated and interdependent; only their coming-into-being together can maintain the rational status of the state's sovereignty: "Sovereignty depends on the fact that the particular functions and powers of the state are not self-subsistent or firmly grounded either on their own account or in the particular will of the individual functionaries, but have their roots ultimately in the unity of the state as their single self."<sup>138</sup> It is important to note the recurring dialectic of freedom, i.e. the universal sphere (Legislature), the particular sphere (Executive), the expression of free subjective will (Crown). For Hegel, freedom as actualised subjective will is a product of a necessary synthesis between particular and universal. As such, it is neither a flight from what is, nor an arbitrary expression of impulses. Moreover, freedom as universal subjective will is neither completely subjective nor completely objective, but a blending of both spheres in and through *thought*.

Hegel introduces safe-guards for freedom both in the essence of the state as a rational entity, and, in practice, in the distribution of power in the constitution. In the beginning of the discussion on the concept of the state Hegel writes: "Rationality, taken generally and in the abstract, consists in the thorough-going unity of the universal and the single. Rationality, concrete in the state, consists (a) so far as its content is concerned, in the unity of objective freedom (i.e. freedom of the universal or substantial will) and subjective freedom (i.e. freedom of everyone in his knowing and in his volition of particular ends); and consequently, (b) so far as its form is concerned, and self-determining action on laws and principles which are thoughts and so universal."<sup>139</sup> Here, the constitution as the reality and rationality of the state represents, and indeed promotes, the realisation of subjective freedom as personal expression, and objective freedom as the rational expression of the community of individuals who constitute the state. This is realised in the form which Hegel attributes to the constitution and the role of each of its three levels of power.

The individual as subjective free will participates in the political process (which also represents objective freedom) indirectly by the medium of the legislature,

which is composed of members elected by the people. The Legislature "is concerned (a) with the laws as such in so far as they require fresh and extended determination; and (b) with the content of home affairs affecting the entire state."<sup>140</sup> The Legislature not only determines the rights and duties of individuals and groups, but also acts as the universal in terms of positing itself as the uniting factor, or the bridge<sup>141</sup> mediating the powers of the state. Also, as is suggested by M. Mitias,<sup>142</sup> the Legislature, in its capacity to alter the laws according to the actual desires and wishes of the people, reflects the stage at which a given community is to be considered a state in the rational sense. Although the Executive is entrusted with the determination of the law this is not absolute: "the Estates are a guarantee of the general welfare and public freedom. A little reflection will show that this guarantee does not lie in their particular power of insight, because the highest civil servants necessarily have a deeper and more comprehensive insight into the nature of the state's organization and requirements."<sup>143</sup> Thus, the Executive cannot act to alter the law without the agreement of the Legislature and the acquiescence of the Crown. Hegel proposes that the Estates "possess a political and administrative sense and temper, no less than a sense for the interests of individuals and particular groups," for "the significance of their position is that, in common with the organized executive, they are a middle term, preventing both the extreme isolation of the power of the crown, which otherwise might seem a mere arbitrary tyranny, and also the isolation of the particular interests of the persons, societies, and Corporations."<sup>144</sup>

A remark should be added here concerning the process of self-actualisation of the individual in the Hegelian *Philosophy of Right*. It is clear that Hegel's system maintains a class system which has earned the reputation of being reactionary and against the process of democratisation, the elements of which have been developing since the French Revolution. It is also clear that Hegel maintains that, within a proper state, to every age there is a constitution which reflects the moment of its development and progress. His own age, imbibed with Romantic spirit and suffering from deep fragmentation of the inner individual, on the one hand, and that of the guild and civil society on the other, can only allow the resolution of the primary problems at hand through the system he proposes in the *Philosophy of Right*; that is, to replace the guild, Hegel suggested that the individuals in the commercial class should organise themselves under the auspices of Corporations (through which the particularity of each individual can be expressed and reflected on the social level) the purpose of which is to be the representative, and the mean toward the synthesis between the individual/particular with the Universal. The interrelatedness of each class to the

others through the established rules of the constitution seeks to maintain the process of synthesis between individual and particular at each social level in the state. Given the historical and socio-political elements with which Hegel contended, it is therefore possible to argue against the claims branding his position as outrightly reactionary.

Hegel's answer to the problem posed by the Romantics shows his deep understanding not merely of the intellectual spirit of his age, but also of the socio-political and economic developments which were taking place. However, like Schiller, his work suffered many distortions in the hands of his disciples, and later came to be associated, by modern writers as well, such as J. Plamenatz, J. Maritain among others, as "against democracy," "illiberal" or even downright "totalitarian."<sup>145</sup> This chapter aimed to make a clear distinction between the Romantics and Hegel, which is particularly necessary since Hegel's critique of Romanticism proves to be equally applicable to the philosophies of both modernists and postmodernists. It is perhaps significant that as we approach the end of the twentieth century, we also stand at the threshold of not only a new century, but also, and more importantly, at the moment of a great deal of geo-political restructuring and ideological questioning regarding the meaning of the state as a viable social and political entity, of the economic need to forego self-identity and blend into the universal, and the fearful demise of our small planet by either atomic bombs or by ecological disaster. Parallels between the Romantic era and ours abound both in the nature of the political spirit, and in the intellectual revolt against a given ideology, that is exemplified in postmodernism; however, we need not follow their example, but heed, to a certain extent, the analytical gift that Hegel has left us as a social and political legacy.



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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Freedom from social and political constraint, rather than freedom to enter upon, and exercise rights and duties within a political association embodied in the state.

<sup>2</sup>Such critiques appear mainly in modern and postmodern critiques of Hegel; of the modern critiques, cf. A. MacIntyre in Chapter II of this Part. Of postmodern critiques, cf. Part III, ch. II, specifically J. Derrida's reading of Hegel.

<sup>3</sup>G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel: The Letters*, trans. Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler, (Indian UP: 1984), p. 64.

<sup>4</sup>According to Hegel, "objective religion is *fides quae creditur*, understanding and memory are the powers that are operative in it, they examine evidences, think it through and preserve it or, if you like, believe it. ... objective religion suffers itself to be arranged in one's mind, organized into a system, set forth in a book, and expounded to others in discourse." Translated in H.S. Harris, *Hegel's Development toward the Sunlight, 1770-1801*, (New York: 1972), p. 484.

<sup>5</sup>G.W.F. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T.M. Knox, (Oxford: Clarendon), p. 60.

<sup>6</sup>Charles Taylor, *Journeys to Selfhood*, (University of California Press, 1980), p. 35

<sup>7</sup>Cited in Taylor, *ibid.*, p. 40

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup>*Early Theological Writings*, *op.cit.*, p. 167.

<sup>10</sup>See G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Logic*, trans. Wallace & Findlay, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), §163, pp. 226-228. When writing of the Notion (Begriff), Hegel defines it as having three parts: "(1) The first is Universality - meaning that it is in free equality with itself in its specific character. (2) The second is Particularity - that is, the specific character, in which the universal continues serenely equal to itself. (3) The third is Individuality - meaning the reflection-into-self of the specific characters of universality and particularity; which negative self-unity has complete and original determinateness, without any loss to its self-identity or universality."

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 170.

<sup>12</sup>For Hegel, actual does not mean real, as it is commonly understood. There is a movement in the actual that is not present in what is generally conceived of as 'real'. This movement is itself the 'unrealised' potential, all that is implied in the possibility of 'becoming' that is not 'there' yet. What is *actual* for Hegel may be understood as what is *potential* for Aristotle. See the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T.M. Knox, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952), p. 10

<sup>13</sup>Theo. Writing, *op. cit.*, pp. 187-88.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 187-88.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>16</sup>Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. S. Cherniak and J. Heckman, (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1974), p. 192

<sup>17</sup>Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, trans. Anthony Bower, (London: Penguin, 1971), pp. 57-58.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup>G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, Trans. T.M. Knox, (Oxford: 1973), p.4; Hegel is critical here of Schelling and his followers.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup>Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller, (Oxford U.P., 1977), §2, p. 2.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, §21, p. 11.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.* my italics.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 12.



<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., §6, p. 4.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., §20, p. 11.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., §22, p. 12. Hegel states that "Reason is *purposive activity*. The exaltation of a supposed Nature over a misconceived thinking, and especially the rejection of external teleology, has brought the form of purpose in general discredit. Still, in the sense in which Aristotle, too, defines Nature as purposive activity, purpose is what is immediate and *at rest*, the unmoved which is also *self-moving*, and as such is Subject. Its power to move, taken abstractly, is *being-for-self* or pure negativity. The result is the same as the beginning, only because the *beginning* is the *purpose*; in other words, the actual is the same as its Notion only because the immediate, realized purpose, or the existent actuality, is movement and unfolded becoming; but it is just this unrest that is the self; and the self is like that immediacy and simplicity of the beginning because it is the result, that which has returned into itself, the latter being similarly just the self. And the self is the sameness and simplicity that relates to itself."

<sup>36</sup>W.T. Stace, *The Philosophy of Hegel*, (London: Dover Pub., 1955), §124-126, p.91-92.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., §179, p. 136.

<sup>38</sup>Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, op.cit., §375, p. 225.

<sup>39</sup>See, Part III, Chapter I on Sartre's theory of imagination.

<sup>40</sup>Hegel, *PhS.*, op.cit., §376, p. 225.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., §23, p. 13.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., §377, p. 226.

<sup>45</sup>Hegel, *PhS.*, op.cit., §91, p. 58.

<sup>46</sup>On this Hegel states: "But when we look carefully at this *pure being* which constitutes the essence of this certainty, and which this certainty pronounces to be its truth, we see that much more is involved. An actual sense-certainty is not merely this pure immediacy, but an *instance* of it. Among countless differences cropping up here we find in every case that the crucial one is that, in sense-certainty, pure being at once splits up into what we have called the two 'Thises', one 'This' as 'I', and the other 'This' as object. When we reflect on this difference, we find that neither one nor the other is only *immediately* present in sense-certainty, but each is at the same time *mediated*: I have this certainty *through* something else, viz., the thing; and it, similarly, is in sense-certainty *through* something else, viz. through the 'I'. Ibid., §92, p. 59.

<sup>47</sup>"consciousness recognizes that it is the *untruth* occurring in perception that falls within it. But by this very recognition it is able at once to supersede this untruth; it distinguishes its apprehension of the truth from the untruth of its perception, corrects this untruth, and since it undertakes to make this correction itself, the truth, *qua* truth of *perception*, falls of course *within consciousness*. The behaviour of consciousness which we have now to consider is thus so constituted that consciousness no longer merely perceives, but is also conscious of its reflection into itself, and separates this from simple apprehension proper." Ibid., §118, p. 72.

<sup>48</sup>For Hegel, "But now there has arisen what did not emerge in these previous relationships, viz. a certainty which is identical with its truth; for the certainty is to itself its own object, and consciousness is to itself the truth. In this there is indeed an otherness; that is to say, consciousness makes a distinction, but one which at the same time is for consciousness *not* a distinction. ... For the *in-itself* is consciousness; but equally it is that *for which* an other (the *in-itself*) is; and it is *for* consciousness that the in-itself of the object, and the being of the object for an other, are one and the same; the 'I' is the *content* of the connection and the connecting itself. Opposed to an other, the 'I' is its own self, and at the same time it overarches this other which, for the 'I', is equally only the 'I' itself." Ibid., §166, p. 104. For a discussion of Hegel's ontology, see Part III, ch. I.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., §167, p. 105.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., §174, p. 109.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., §175, p. 110.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., §178, p. 111.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., §179, p. 111.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., §184, p. 112.

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., italics added.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., §187, p. 114.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>In death, individuals "put an end to their consciousness in its alien setting of natural existence, that is to say, they put an end to themselves, and are done away with as *extremes* wanting to be *for themselves*, or to have an existence of their own. But with this there vanishes from their interplay the essential moment of splitting into extremes with opposite characteristics; and the middle term collapses into a lifeless unity which is split into lifeless, merely immediate, unopposed extremes; and the two do not reciprocally give and receive one another back from each other consciously, but leave each other free only indifferently, like things. Their act is an abstract negation, not the negation coming from consciousness, which supersedes in such a way as to preserve and maintain what is superseded, and consequently survives its own supersession." Ibid., §188, p. 114-115. This act or process in consciousness is often referred to by Derrida as "Aufhebung," and is discussed in Part III, Chapter II in the discussion of Derrida's critique of Hegel's philosophy, and more particularly, the Master-Bondsman dialectic.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., §189, p. 115.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>See Hegel's discussion on the function of *Also* in the section on *Perception*, Ibid., §130-131, pp. 77-79.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., §190, p. 116.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., §196, pp. 118-119.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., §197, p. 120.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., §200, p. 122.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., §204, p. 124.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., §205, p. 125.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., §207, p. 126.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., §208, p. 127.

<sup>80</sup>G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. Johnston and Struthers, (London: Allan and Unwin, 1966), 2 vols., Vol. 2, p.374

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., Hegel states: "formally the End is a totality infinite within itself - especially if activity which operates by Ends is taken to be absolute will and understanding," p. 376.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., on this Hegel states: "Teleology has incurred the reproach of triviality so heavily because the Ends which it demonstrated are, as it befell, more significant or more trifling; the End-relation of Objects thus necessarily often appeared merely childish, because this relation on the contrary allows to the determinatenesses of its Objects their value as contingent according to their content; and the Object is indifferent to these, which are supposed to have a higher validity neither for the Objects nor for subjective understanding. Consequently, in its connexion of external necessity, this principle affords the consciousness of infinite freedom as against Teleology, which sets up something absolute whatever it contains that is trivial or even contemptible." pp. 376-377.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid. p. 377.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., pp. 377-78

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 379.

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- <sup>88</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>89</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 380
- <sup>91</sup>Ibid., Mechanism is for Hegel the process of deductive reasoning found in the scientific method, and Chemism is the physical contribution of the subject to the realisation of the objective telos.
- <sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 381.
- <sup>93</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>94</sup>Ibid., on this Hegel states: "If that which is adequate to an End is ascribed to an understanding, then, as was previously observed, regard is being had to the determinate aspect of the content. But the content must be taken in general as the reasonable in its existence. It manifests reasonableness because it is the concrete Notion which preserves the objective distinction in its absolute unity. Consequently it is essentially the Syllogism in itself. It is the universal which is equal to itself, and, as containing self-repellent negativity, it is here universal, in so far as it is still indeterminate, activity. But, since this is negative self-relation, the activity immediately determines itself and gives itself the moment of particularity and this, since it is likewise the intro-reflected, totality of form, is content as against the posited distinctions of form;" pp. 381-82.
- <sup>95</sup>Ibid., p. 381.
- <sup>96</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>97</sup>Ibid., p. 382.
- <sup>98</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>99</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>100</sup>Hegel states: "the End is this total intro-Reflection of Objectivity, and is so immediately; and, in so far as it is this, first, self-determination or particularity as simple intro-Reflection is distinct from the concrete form and is a determinate content. Accordingly the End is finite, although formally it is infinite subjectivity;" *ibid.*
- <sup>101</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>102</sup>Ibid., p. 383.
- <sup>103</sup>Ibid., p. 385.
- <sup>104</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>105</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>106</sup>According to Hegel, "the Means by virtue of the relation (which is external to it) to the extreme of the End - which relation is for it a form to which it is indifferent;" *ibid.*, p. 384.
- <sup>107</sup>Ibid., p. 384
- <sup>108</sup>Ibid., p. 385.
- <sup>109</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>110</sup>Ibid., p. 394
- <sup>111</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>112</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>113</sup>Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, op.cit., §1. Consequently, all citations from this edition will be noted (PhR: and no. of paragraph §); when preceded by a [A] it signifies an Addition to paragraph cited.
- <sup>114</sup>PhR: §4.
- <sup>115</sup>G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, trans. William Wallace, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), §443, p. 184; consequently all citations from this edition will be noted as PhM: §#.
- <sup>116</sup>PhM: §443.
- <sup>117</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>118</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>119</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>120</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>121</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>122</sup>PhR: §4.
- <sup>123</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>124</sup>Ibid., §6.

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- <sup>125</sup>Ibid., §7.  
<sup>126</sup>Ibid.  
<sup>127</sup>Ibid., §5.  
<sup>128</sup>Wilfrid Ver Eecke, "Hegel on Freedom, Economics, and the State," *Hegel on Economics and Freedom*, (Macon: Mercer UP, 1987), p. 129.  
<sup>129</sup>PhR., ibid., §21R.  
<sup>130</sup>PhM., ibid., §469.  
<sup>131</sup>PhR., ibid., §24R.  
<sup>132</sup>Ibid., §21R.  
<sup>133</sup>Ibid., §27. It is perhaps noteworthy to remind the reader that for Hegel, freedom cannot be non-determined actuality, but that it is extremely important to choose, according to reason, i.e. thought, among contending impulses, and it is only after this choice is made that true freedom becomes attainable. Freedom, unlike that of the Romantics, cannot exist in terms of a negation, i.e. as freedom from, because as such, the choice implies a complete indifference to reality, a continued flight into indeterminateness. On the different types of will, cf. Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, § 12-24.  
<sup>134</sup>Ibid., p. 11.  
<sup>135</sup>PhR., ibid., §258 A.  
<sup>136</sup>Ibid., §182 A.  
<sup>137</sup>Ibid., §273.  
<sup>138</sup>Ibid., §278.  
<sup>139</sup>Ibid., §258.  
<sup>140</sup>Ibid., §298.  
<sup>141</sup>Ibid., §300.  
<sup>142</sup>Michael H. Mitias, *Moral Foundation of the State in Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1984), p. 34  
<sup>143</sup>PhR., ibid., §301.  
<sup>144</sup>Ibid., §302, §314.  
<sup>145</sup>Mitias, *Moral Foundations ...*, op.cit., p. 15.

## **Chapter II: Disenchantment or Emotivism? Weber and MacIntyre on Freedom in Modernity**

Far from exemplifying the coming-into-being of Hegel's theory of freedom, the present chapter seeks to tell the story of the difference between what the modern state established in terms of freedom and the kind of freedom that Hegel believed was in our grasp. Max Weber and Alasdair MacIntyre tell of the fall of the age into separation and distinction, rather than harmony and synthesis. This chapter has a twofold objective. First, it seeks to distinguish between theory and practice by establishing that the type of modernity that is conceived of having taken place (in the writing of Weber for instance) is distinct from the theory expounded by Hegel. This distinction is necessary, for, as we shall see in Part III on postmodernism, critiques of modernity often take the shape of critiques of Hegelian and Marxist dialectics. The second objective is concerned with establishing the nature of the debates that so-called 'modernists' engaged in. Although Weber and MacIntyre approach the study of freedom and modernity from two opposed sides, they nevertheless portray it as caught in a game of separation of fact from value. Weber commends and MacIntyre condemns, yet both tended to perceive freedom in terms of this basic separation. Unlike Hegel, the theoretical alternatives they sought maintained this separation, viewing it either directly (Weber) as a necessity, or indirectly (MacIntyre) as essentially natural. Furthermore, they did not apply dialectics as a tool for the development of a socio-political theory. They are therefore children of Schiller's second phase, suggesting that the third phase -the synthesis of opposites - is yet to be achieved.

### **(a) Weber: Reason and the Disenchanted**

What is often repeated by critics of the Enlightenment tradition regarding the work of Max Weber concerns primarily Weber's definition of the state of the world in the term "disenchanted". The word itself is equivocal; it contains both a positive and a negative connotation. Positively, disenchantment signifies 'freedom from enchantment'; negatively it is expressed as 'disillusionment'. It is curious that the phrase Weber used is often understood in its negative connotation by those whom Gellner calls Hegelians. In this Chapter analyses will aim to define what Weber understood by modernity's Enlightenment. Weber's understanding of reason as



liberation is equivocal and appears to be both in agreement and at odds with the Enlightenment tradition. On the one hand, reason is freedom, not a Hegelian actualisation of the self-determined individual will, but the smooth operation of a capitalist market and all the material satisfaction which this implies; reason is therefore instrumental. Briefly, freedom is material plenitude actualised as freedom of choice in the market (this regardless of the nature of the good). On the other hand, the Hegelian freedom of individuals actualised in social roles is rejected by Weber who views any type of individualistic freedom as *irrational*. Weber would agree with Hegel in that individuals should join society in terms of social roles, such as their necessary participation in bureaucracy, but he would not see this as freedom, since any socially imposed role is itself an imposition and cannot maintain individual freedom. Weber's position regarding the safeguarding of the sanctity of the individual's liberty within society leads him into problems whose ramifications will be brought forward through a consistent contrast of his position with Hegel's. Similarities and differences in the whole project of both authors will be discussed in light of what both recognised as what is 'possible' for their own socio-political reality. Questions of what is 'desirable' are posed with respect to the nature of the social telos which is common to both thinkers, viz. realisation of freedom for the modern individual as the expression of a freely developed subjectivity in a society which promotes this very concept of freedom. This Chapter begins with Weber's definition of the nature and function of scientific rationality as it is applied to social organisation. Second, there will be an exposition of his understanding of what defines 'individual freedom' and how it may be recognised as the ultimate social telos. Finally, the practical side to Weber's social edifice is presented in his view of the process of differentiation as applied to society.

### *Freedom as Disenchantment*

Following in the Enlightenment tradition, Max Weber, in "Science as a Vocation,"<sup>1</sup> defined the advantages of modernity's adoption of scientific rationality in the educational system of universities. When comparing the 'meaning' which science held for a Bacon and a Galileo with the scientists of the Enlightenment, Weber denounced the 'intellectualism' which permeated the interpretation of science in the Classical Age, and commended modern youth who recognise modernity's purpose as the "redemption from the intellectualism of science in order to return to one's own

nature and therewith to nature in general," adding in a lighter tone: "Science as a way to art? Here no criticism is even needed."<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Weber condemned academics who remain attached to the Humanist idea of science, that is, as a means to the knowledge of God. On this he commented:

...during the period of the rise of the exact sciences ... the scientific worker ... conceived to be his task: to show the path to God. ... Who -aside from certain big children who are indeed found in the natural sciences- still believes that the findings of astronomy, biology, physics, or chemistry could teach us anything about the *meaning* of the world? ... If these natural sciences lead to anything in this way, they are apt to make the belief that there is such a thing as the 'meaning' of the universe die out at its very roots.<sup>3</sup>

The "big children," to whom Weber referred here, are later more specifically recognised as those found occupying "university chairs or editorial offices."<sup>4</sup> He clearly identified their attachment to the Humanist definition of liberty as a negative influence on modernity's youth, for he saw it as leading them into craving religious experiences in the practice of reason of everyday activity. For Weber, this attitude signifies the very fall into the 'irrational', a state whose advent is necessary insofar as it prompts the raising to consciousness and analysis of the elements which feed it. Irrationalism is for Weber, as Romanticism was for Hegel, the necessary moment of negation, a moment in whose wake an eventual "emancipation" of science "from intellectualism" may occur. Science, defined as "the technique of mastering life which rests upon science,"<sup>5</sup> is here conceived of as the form, i.e. as reason, rather than the substantive content of the life-world.

Weber defined what he called "intellectualization" in terms of a distinction which he made between the idea of "progress" and the increase in knowledge about the life-world of every Western individual. In this distinction Weber argued that the increasing complexity of the modern world, far from allowing individuals a better knowledge of its mechanism and function, acts as an alienating factor thereby leaving individuals 'disenchanted'. Weber rejected the idea that Western progress necessarily leads individuals to gain a greater mastery over their world for, compared to a savage, modern individuals seem to know far less about the institutions which organise and rule their lives. It is worth noting that this is the conception which may have been responsible for the misunderstanding of Weber's attitude toward the process of disenchantment. Weber seems to lead his readers to believe that disenchantment in

the world is negative, signifying a feeling of alienation and of disillusionment; however, his own definition belies this interpretation. For Weber, the very process of 'disenchantment' occurs when

... principally there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation. ... One need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did the savage, for whom such mysterious powers existed. Technical means and calculations perform the service. This above all is what intellectualization means.<sup>6</sup>

It is therefore a loss of a certain degree of ignorance and uncertainty that disenchantment is responsible for. Modern individuals, and this will be made clearer in the section on bureaucracy, may rest in certainty that their affairs will be dealt with not according to godly caprice, but to rational organisation.

However, disenchantment as disillusionment is equally present in Weber's work, specifically when discussing the link between 'science' as infinite progress and its effect on the substantive significance of an individual's life. Weber associated this with the Romantics' bewilderment regarding the failure of the power of Science to bring to *infinity* the life of modern individuals, and saw its clear expression in the "broodings" of Leo Tolstoi. The question which concerned Tolstoi "revolved around the problem of whether or not death is a meaningful phenomenon,"<sup>7</sup> to which he answered that for modern individuals death has no meaning. This is so due to the idea of 'progress' which is virtually infinite, and no one who experiences death at any given moment in this road towards infinity may give a significance to their death, or that of others.

In light of his reflections on Tolstoi's work, Weber gives a fresh look on the 'disenchantment' of the Romantics. Romanticism is then seen not merely as a revolt, a class struggle, or a pure and utter disillusionment with the results of the Industrial Revolution, but also as a quest for a 'meaning' for life and death. For Weber, the modern individual "placed in the midst of the continuous enrichment of culture by ideas, knowledge, and problems, may become 'tired of life' but not 'satiated with life'," for

he catches only the most minute part of what the life of the spirit brings forth ever anew, and what he seizes is always something provisional and not definitive, and therefore death

for him is a meaningless occurrence. And because death is meaningless, civilized life as such is meaningless; by its very 'progressiveness' it gives death the imprint of meaninglessness.<sup>8</sup>

In recognising that rationality is "meaningless because it gives no answer to our question, the only question important to us: "What shall we do and how shall we live?";"<sup>9</sup> Weber not only limits scientific reason's applicability to quantitative areas of knowledge, but suggests that rationality,<sup>10</sup> both formal and substantive, has no place in the shaping of individual freedom because it is mainly concerned with the material. Although 'substantive' rationality deals with values, it measures its degree of 'success' in terms of 'formal', empirical, rationality. According to Weber, substantive rationality "is the degree in which a given group of persons ... is or could be, adequately provided with goods by means of an economically oriented course of social action. This course of action will be interpreted in terms of a given set of ultimate values no matter what they may be."<sup>11</sup> However, given the numerous points of view, themselves relying on "absolute values,"<sup>12</sup> constituting substantive rationality, Weber claims that they are "significant only as bases from which to judge the *outcome* of economic action,"<sup>13</sup> making it possible "to criticize the attitude toward the economic activity itself or toward the means used, from ethical, ascetic or aesthetic points of view."<sup>14</sup> In other words, ethical values do not enter into the qualification of the success of a specific economic enterprise. For Weber, in the field of social and economic action "there is no question ... of attempting value judgments ..., but only of determining and delimiting what is to be called 'formal'."<sup>15</sup> Once again Weber administers the separation of means from ends, of value judgement from social organisation, thereby acknowledging rationality as a mere instrument, for it allows the individual to acquire a specific type of 'self-knowledge', one which is conscious and deliberate, but cannot be used to define the content and teleology of this 'self', since it is estranged from the realm of value. In the context of social and economic organisation, substantive rationality "is itself in a certain sense "formal"; that is, it is an abstract, generic concept."<sup>16</sup> Socially applied reason is therefore mechanical, and its only telos lies in its capacity to help society overcome material scarcity. Social teleology is thereby left undealt with, and the very question of social finality becomes blurred. Weber follows a liberal understanding of social bonds wherein no social telos exists, but only competing individualist ends.

Moreover, in his definition of social organisation, Weber sought to maintain



an element of mysticism, of mysterious powers - in a word, an *irrational* element which he called 'charisma', and with which he identified 'freedom'. Weber describes charisma as "a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional qualities."<sup>17</sup> Charismatic individuals must be socially recognised for "this recognition is a matter of complete personal devotion arising out of enthusiasm, or of despair and hope."<sup>18</sup> In this context, Weber is suggesting that a large part of social and political systems operates upon charismatic legitimation. The choice of leaders (whether political or moral) arises from irrational motives such as extreme emotions. For Weber, Charisma commands loyalty and obligation in a manner that a rationally conceived constitution does not, and suggests that whether the charismatic leader is an individual or a social group, charisma's presence and power may go unchecked in the absence of a rational body which may be the only means to oversee their actions; hence the need for the rational bureaucratic machine. Weber's definition of 'freedom' recognises a substantial part of freedom as residing in the social expression of 'emotions', what Hegelian theory does not allow. It also suggests that true freedom is an expression of personal caprice, or heart-felt mystical emotion, rather than rationality in its instrumental form.<sup>19</sup> This explains even further the equivocal meaning that Weber imparts to *disenchantment*. From this it follows that if freedom is of an 'irrational' nature, then the very development of socio-political structuring is a prison, a necessary evil, constructed to keep humanity from the self-destructive effects of its own irrationality. As such, modernity's development towards rationality/un-freedom seems perverse and un-enlightened if in its quest to control its own 'irrationality' it throws itself into a more efficient hell of its own, one that Weber termed "the iron cage of modernity."

Furthermore, when seen in the context of Hegel's *Logic*, Weber's proposal to maintain individual freedom as irrationality, through the creation of a 'rational, neutral, and value-free' social matrix, one which embodies the norm of 'normlessness', appears Kantian insofar as it creates a separation between the individual telos as freedom, and the social telos as reason. In Weber's society, individuals would appear forever alienated from the objective world, incapable of seizing the thing-in-itself. Hegel would argue that Weber's project would fail, precisely because individuals growing up in such a society will find it very difficult to maintain a social identity on the one hand, and continue to develop a healthy personal view of their freedom and its extent, on the other. For Hegel, socialisation is a



necessary condition for the realisation and actualisation of any type of individual freedom. The subject needs a social role through which an expression of this freedom in the public sphere can take place. However, in spite of the bi-polar view that both thinkers held with regards to the nature of human freedom, it is curious to see that both ultimately proposed two very similar social organisation -bureaucracy- for the safe-guarding and promotion of two distinct types of freedom. The difference seems to lie in what each believed constitutes the nature of individual telos, and of social teleology. Weber's view reflects scepticism and pessimism as to the fulfilment of individual freedom in society, whereas Hegel's remains hopeful. Differences between both thinkers seem to stem from their view of how individuals relate to their own selves and to society. That Weber based his vision of society on the fast developing capitalist enterprise becomes more visible in a closer study of the value-free nature of its bureaucracy. To this we now turn.

#### *Weber's Value-free Society*

Unlike Hegel, Weber does not believe that a personal goal may be achieved in and through a public office. Individuals do not, nor indeed are able to, fulfil their telos in the vocation which they adopt in the life-world. While defining the 'essence' of the vocation of teaching, Weber makes a very strict distinction between the *duty* that individual teachers have toward the fulfilment of their vocation, and their own *duty* toward the fulfilment of their *personal* aspirations -whether political, social, religious or ideological. In the social realm, the individual may not, and this out of *duty* rather than personal conviction, impress any subjective views onto the hearers; the responsibility of finding one's path rests with the individual, and a teacher's duty is to open the young mind to the possibilities which are available, hence to the tools of thinking, which aid in the making and execution of personal decisions.<sup>20</sup> No ethical and moral content should, as they do in the Hegelian state, be able to define the social telos or mold the decisions of the nascent personality of modern individuals. Weber would show extreme intolerance to the Hegelian concept of society specifically because it seeks to guide, for any guidance is seen as capable of being corrupt and made to promote the enslavement of individuals. In the objective realm, or that of the life-world, the individual is guided by the precepts of rationality, both formal and substantive, a mere method according to which the Humanist idea of freedom of the *will* is fully expressed.

Weber's discussion of the nature and scope of science in socio-political life, and the emancipation of the subjective will, shows him to be keenly aware of the Humanist project of liberty as individual self-determination and its earlier 'fusion' with 'Science'. Unlike the philosophers of the Classical Age and Enlightenment, he did not see Science as the means toward the actualisation of personal freedom in society, but, on the contrary, he saw to be means to overcome economic scarcity through perfected techniques, whose purpose is to manipulate and subjugate nature to the profit of humanity. Natural law, what modern debate terms as instrumental reason, cannot, and indeed needs not, pretend to answer ethical and moral concerns, but should provide knowledge to a humanity whose achievement lies in its liberation from religious mysticism and asceticism. For Weber, the true sense of personal freedom lies in the capacity of individuals to *choose*.<sup>21</sup> The responsibility of this choice lies upon the individual's shoulders, and no one or anything may intervene on one's behalf to save one from eternal damnation, or guide one to paradise. The community is no longer responsible for the 'souls' of its members such as was the case in medieval society. Society's function, and therewith its telos, becomes limited to the making and maintaining of a system which safeguards the availability to the individual of possibilities, freedom of choice and of will.<sup>22</sup> Science, and its method of rationalisation, operate as guides toward the achievement of such a neutrality in socio-political organisation.

Hegel would seriously object to Weber's radical wish to maintain a society in which freedom of choice is posed as the only form of 'self-determined actualisation of the will'. In the *Logic*, Hegel states that although freedom of choice is "undoubtedly a vital element in the will (which in its very notion is free)," it "is only in the first instance a freedom in form," for the "matter of choice is given, and known" and as such it is antithetical to the notion of freedom.<sup>23</sup> Weber's vision of society cannot admit to Hegel's conception of individuality because in the capitalist market subjectivity remains, in the first instance, in the process of constantly redefining itself through negation. This process is recognised as a first moment that is precarious. Its stability is further endangered by the capacity of the capitalist system, in its very aim to tap consumer needs, to manipulate and mould consumers'(subjects') understanding of their own needs, the primary source of their self-identity in the world, and this because capitalism is itself geared towards the acquisition of *profit*<sup>24</sup> through exchange. It thrives on creating a need for its products

by appealing to consumers' desires, the side that Weber identifies with the irrational, i.e. freedom. Capitalism leads towards the recognition of material acquisition as a specific form of freedom and of choice, but leaves moral and ethical content undefined. For Weber, next to the freedom to choose material possessions there lies a society whose organisation maintains social institutions in which moral and ethical issues are dealt with, and act as moral guidance to those who seek them.<sup>25</sup> This society would be led by a specific body of government - bureaucracy.

### *The Bureaucratic Machine*

In his lectures on the nature of "Bureaucracy,"<sup>26</sup> Weber demonstrates the benefits of the application of the process of rationalisation on the modern socio-political system. Modern 'instrumental' reason would indeed make necessary the development of a process of 'differentiation' of value spheres, such as law, morality and culture. This process is necessary in so far as it allows the separation of spheres of fact from value. Scientific rationality asserts that a connection between fact and value is neither possible nor desirable. Moreover, this rationalisation does not operate merely in the public sphere, but extends to the private sphere, for it maintains their formal separation in the very distinction it makes between *objective* and *subjective* law. While the former permits the organisation of society in a rational, value-free manner, the latter is in its own being indeterminate because it follows the level of self-consciousness of each individual. The opposition between Hegel and Weber appears sharply in this context. For Hegel, self-consciousness may only be realised through an objective *other*, namely a form of social activity with which individuals are able to identify their position in society. Weber, while maintaining the idea of the realisation of self-consciousness through an objective *other*, chooses to empty this *other* of its objective content (as religious or moral values) and replaces this content with a distinct notion of public *duty*, which demands that individuals occupying public posts be conscientious in executing their tasks without the expression of *any subjective preference*, or personal value judgement. This demand is equivocal, for it makes of the annihilation of value judgments in society a moral virtue. Hence, individuals working in public life have the moral obligation not to articulate what makes them moral and holders of values in society, a condition which separates the subjective from the objective, causing individuals to feel alienated from their activities, and their society.



Synthesis, as the moment wherein the individual subject is reconciled with the objective order, remains constant in both cases. However, for Weber, the differentiation of spheres of value limit the individual from achieving access to a sense of *selfhood* through a given understanding of history. The individual uses factual data, such as science as means to avoid past mistakes, but not as basis for the grounding of a self-identity. History is useful as it serves to provide illustrated examples of socio-political organisation and means of production, and as such it is evolutionary. The manner in which Weber differs from Hegel lies in his belief that self-consciousness is not a historical product, but is what Foucault later called the "making of the self." Hegel did not separate this process of self-consciousness from history, whereas Weber, followed by the phenomenologists and existentialists, did. He did so because the maintenance of history as the basis for individual identity will only serve to leave modern individuals at the mercy of historical interpretation, i.e. the subjective understanding of history by those whose own understanding is often coloured by their ideology, self-interest or class interest (as was the case with the Romantic movement). Weber seems to advocate the view that modern individuals represent the only truly free men and women in history, specifically due to their capacity to choose the content of their 'self' according to what inspires them. The process of differentiation means to permit the availability of 'value spheres', but does not allow their content to spill into society. Social organisation's telos would be the pure maintenance of their availability as 'possible' means toward the discovery of the individual 'self'. Here, individuals have to constantly redefine their sense of self as they advance through life, according to the access they have to such spheres.

In "Politics as a Vocation," Weber grounded his concept of freedom in the process of differentiation. He defined the modern state as "a compulsory association which organizes domination," and "is successful in seeking to monopolize the legitimate use of physical force as a means of domination within a territory."<sup>27</sup> It bases its legitimation of domination on the belief in the validity of legal statute and functional 'competence' which is based upon rationally created rules. This type of domination is "exercised by the modern 'servant of the state' and by all those bearers of power who in this respect resemble him."<sup>28</sup> Political domination is maintained through an administrative apparatus which "requires that human conduct be conditioned to obedience" to the bearers of legitimate power. This apparatus requires a specific type of administrative 'division of labour' which maintains the "'separation'



of the administrative staff, the administrative officials, and of the workers from the material means of administrative organization."<sup>29</sup> The administrative staff are also bound by obedience to the power of the holder for several reasons. On the personal level, the material reward, and social honour which is based upon respective wages act as an appeal to entice the joining of the bureaucracy. However, on a more functional level, the 'division of labour' within the system engulfs individual civil servants on both the professional and personal level; they are pegs within a bureaucratic machine without which they cannot have a meaning or use for their existence.<sup>30</sup>

Weber conceived of social roles as a medium in which no value judgement, other than duty may be imposed on the individual, whose only purpose is the maintenance of an atmosphere in which individual subjective self-knowledge and consciousness, sought outside of these social roles, is not merely a by-product, but a goal. The economic development of the capitalist system is thereby understood in a Marxist context, for its accelerated development only hastens the production of material elements necessary for the actualisation of individual freedom from want. However, unlike Marx, for Weber the freedom achieved in the post-capitalist age will not be communal, but absolutely individualistic. Weber did not envision the appearance of a 'communal' spirit from the ashes of capitalism, because he specifically believed that freedom is only possible in and through a society organised according to his system of 'differentiation'. Like Hegel, Marx, in Weber's view, imparted an ethical value to the social organisation with which Weber would remain uncomfortable, for it would seek to mold, and thereby, restrict the process of self-knowledge of the individual.

The separation of value and fact is illustrated in the important distinction Weber makes between political control and economic control. In his discussion regarding the revolution which occurred in Germany in 1918,<sup>31</sup> he acknowledged the success of the revolutionaries in gaining control over the political apparatus through public elections, but expressed doubt (even hostility) towards their success in "carrying through the expropriation within the capitalist enterprises," specifically because political control is understood by Weber to be almost entirely separated from the working body of civil society, which is, in turn, dependent to a large extent upon the economic system. This apparent distrust of the power of the political body (which he associates with its charismatic leaders) is indicative of Weber's recognition

of the vast influence of the capitalist system on the organisation and application of political power -one which Hegel was not in a position to take into account. It therefore follows that the holders of legitimate political power within the capitalist system remain impotent when it comes to the making of the decisions in social policy. Weber explicitly allied himself with the capitalist class, and maintained that the major contradiction found within the capitalist-democratic states occurs when capitalism pushes for bureaucracy and lack of ethos, and democracy demands ethical considerations. Weber was in favour of bureaucracy because it would maintain an autonomous machine whose efficiency is likely to override the 'ethical', and for Weber 'irrational', decisions of the charismatic leader or group chosen by the public in the democratic state.<sup>32</sup>

With respect to the political organisation of society, Hegel's view of an ideal political state whose ruling body finds equilibrium in the creation of a bureaucratic body composed of two types of divergent classes (propertied and entrepreneurial), is seen by Weber as at best questionable. To illustrate this, he distinguishes between two ways of making politics one's vocation: as a specific expression of one's own essence, or as a means to an end. On this he stated:

Either one lives 'for' politics or one lives 'off' politics. By no means is this contrast an exclusive one. The rule is, rather, that man does both, at least in thought, and certainly he also does both in practice. He who lives 'for' politics makes politics his life, in an internal sense. Either he enjoys the naked possession of the power he exerts, or he nourishes his inner balance and self-feeling by the consciousness that his life has meaning in the service of a 'cause'. In this internal sense, every sincere man who lives for a cause also lives off this cause. The distinction hence refers to a much more substantial aspect of the matter, namely, to the economic. He who strives to make politics a permanent source of income lives 'off' politics as a vocation, whereas he who does not do this lives 'for' politics.<sup>33</sup>

Hence, although Weber allows the Hegelian solution -that a politician may live, as members of the Executive class (propertied) do, simply 'for' the purpose of a 'cause' or social telos- to remain a possibility, he adds many conditions which render such a possibility if not rare, generally tentative with regards to the social good. For to be economically 'uninterested' the politician in question would have to be wealthy, and, therefore, will not be endowed with the awareness of the economic problems plaguing lower classes. Weber analyses the position of modern professions (workers

and entrepreneurs) and finds them incapable of being what he calls "economically dispensable," that is, one whose "income must not depend upon the fact that he constantly and personally places his ability and thinking entirely, or at least by far predominantly, in the service of economic acquisition."<sup>34</sup> Befitting such a definition are the *rentiers* found only in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, whose existence cannot be taken as a given, at least not as Hegel would have us believe.

Hegel would deem Weber's attempt to advocate the idea of promoting a value-free social matrix through the imposition of a specific moral value, i.e. duty, a self-defeating process. Duty has both a social and moral dimension. To impose as duty society's need to be morally and ethically neutral is indeed self-contradictory and limiting. Furthermore, as definitively separated from the life-world, freedom in the world, the product of the very process of synthesis between the individual and the universal, cannot take place, thereby leaving the individual with a sense of freedom that is at best illusory, since the social expression is absent. Finally, if the very process of participation in society is to be kept separate from value, what would justify or legitimise the content of any ethical decision? Weber seems to suggest that such a society is necessary for the individual to develop a personal sense of identity which forms itself as a result of its interaction with the life-world, but not as a product of this world. Hegel's argument would add that substantive rationality, i.e. what deals with values and ends, does necessarily belong to, and effects the product of 'formal' rationality, for it poses itself as the objective content according to which individuals arrive at decisions the purpose of which is moral. Rather, a complete separation between formal and substantive reason in social behaviour impoverishes the very content of individual knowledge of one's selfhood and identity, for, according to Hegel, one may only be regarded as subject insofar as one's actions in the world are recognised by the social order and evaluated in terms of the social-good.

Weber's preoccupation with the separation of fact from value, the public sphere from the private sphere, and morality from politics and socio-economic organisation seems to stem from his wish to keep the moral sphere separate from, and thereby immune to, the abusive hand of the capitalist enterprise. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber recognised capitalism's capacity to exploit the very substance of morality, which he associated with religion, reducing all moral values to mere objects of persuasion, used by capitalist enterprises to further their

efficiency. For Weber, under capitalism "material goods have gained an increasing and finally an inexorable power over the lives of men as at no previous period in history."<sup>35</sup> Weber shows awareness of the mechanism and need for expansion by modern capitalism, the power of which, he sees, must be checked by a value-free administration, and separated entirely from subjective morality.

However, this does not in any meaningful sense answer the question as to the moral content of the ideology of such a Weberian state. If democracy as a system which is based on freedom to vote is unviable because of the political influence of charismatic leaders, then Weber seems to reject all ideology, since for him, individual preferences are formed by the market. For Weber, ideology appears as a *value-full* phenomenon to be savoured by individuals, and may, as a choice, fulfil the definition of one's own selfhood, but cannot be the ruling hand in society. Weber's system leaves certain questions unresolved. In the first instance, how is one to define the nature, content and orientation of the socially differentiated value-spheres? More specifically, who, in a society composed of neutral, value-less individual bureaucrats, would be the decision maker, and in what context can this driver of the bureaucratic body lead the bureaucratic machine and define the content of this function? Also, if value-free activity is a duty, how are bureaucrats to learn such a quality which is itself a value-full concept, and by whom? It is my opinion that Weber's work does not seek to answer questions of an ideological nature, but adheres vehemently to what is here-and-now without looking further into the future. In effect, Weber seems to scoff at the ideological aspirations of humanity, and ends up seeing all ideological efforts which impart ethical values to society as shamanistic and un-enlightened. Little did he realise that the very telos of his own study of society was itself the product of an ideology, and that his very drive to separate fact from value maintains, to an extreme extent, the conditions needed to make a Humanist dream come true.



### (b) MacIntyre's Emotivist Society

If Weber's hopeful position suggesting that instrumental reason yields positive results in the socio-political and economic life of individuals was severely criticised by Marcuse and members of the Frankfurt School, this same position is viewed by MacIntyre as responsible for the 'socio-ethical crisis' of modern society. Permeating MacIntyre's thought is a drive to identify and define the elements pertaining to the crisis of modern values. MacIntyre believes that social cohesion, originally the very basis for individual socialisation and identification of moral values, dissolved because modernity heeded the Enlightenment's recommendation to render individuals autonomous, thereby separating public utility from moral decisions, public economy from the private household, and public morality from private values.

The following consists of a brief study of MacIntyre's definition of the crisis of modernity which he defines in *After Virtue* (1981), and is divided in three sections. Section one deals with MacIntyre's definition of Emotivism. Section two develops MacIntyre's critique of the Enlightenment project and contrasts it to Hegel's critique of Kant. Section three develops MacIntyre's 'alternative' to modernity's socio-political 'practices' and provides a discussion of the nature of MacIntyre's philosophy.

#### *Emotivism: Modernity's Plight?*

MacIntyre's concern over the crisis of modernity is manifested in his study of the effect of scientific rationality's relativism on the coherence of moral judgements and expressions in modern society. For MacIntyre, modern society is suffering from a state of moral disorder due to the effect of the separation of fact from value in the socio-political sphere. Emotivism appears as modernity's "empirical thesis ... about those who continue to use moral and other evaluative expressions, as if they were governed by objective and impersonal criteria, when all grasp of any such criterion has been lost."<sup>36</sup> Here Emotivism can be defined as the very expression of Scientific Method where 'Is' and 'Ought' are completely separated. Values are separated from facts in the sense that only facts can be discussed in terms of scientific 'reason', whereas values, deemed subjective in character, are neither true nor false, and "agreement in moral judgement is not to be secured by any rational method, for there

are none."<sup>37</sup>

The Emotivist doctrine concerns itself with the theory that the *meaning* of uttered sentences is a direct expression of moral judgement. In uttering the sentence "this is good," C.L. Stevenson, founder of Emotivist theory, claims that its meaning suggests "I approve of this; do so as well."<sup>38</sup> Here the moral judgement of the speaker is expressed and aims at one and the same time to alter through its expression the moral decision of the hearer. In spite of its success in characterising the dilemma of modern society's incapacity to bridge the fact-value gulf, MacIntyre claims that Emotivism, as a theory of the meaning of a certain type of sentence, fails for two reasons. First, emotivism's claim to be able to identify the types of feelings of approval or disapproval that are the expression of the utterer's moral attitude is deemed unfounded. In the first instance, its explanation of such expressions occurs in a circular fashion where expressions are explained in terms of moral concepts and vice versa. MacIntyre claims that Emotivism attempts to explain the content and working of a faculty (morality) of which it is itself ignorant, and argues that this type of attitudinal explanation, as expressed by a specifically moral judgement, has "become vacuously circular."<sup>39</sup>

The second reason for its failure lies in emotivism's concentration on the meaning of sentences as the utterances of moral judgements rather than the use the speaker makes of these sentences. A sentence uttered in a menacing tone does not necessarily express in its meaning a sign of disapproval, but it might very well do so in the tone and facial expression of the speaker, which in itself makes up the effect on the hearer. MacIntyre gives the example of the angry school-master who may vent his feelings of frustration and disapproval at the student who has just made an arithmetical mistake: 'seven times seven is forty-nine!'<sup>40</sup> In this situation the tone and the facial expressions serve to indicate the schoolmaster's feelings and not the technical meaning of the sentence uttered. Herein the Emotivist theory may be rejected for placing its emphasis on the meaning of the utterance rather than on its use.

MacIntyre defines the social content of Emotivism as suggesting "the obliteration of any genuine distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative social relations."<sup>41</sup> This entails the obliteration of the Kantian moral distinction between a moral and an immoral conception of subjectivity, for it does not make the

distinction between the treatment of others as means or as ends. In the Emotivist tradition "others are always means, never ends."<sup>42</sup> For MacIntyre, Emotivism is a direct indication of the disintegration of the Kantian position, and the decline of morality which took place during the Enlightenment. Questions of ends are seen in the Emotivist tradition as questions of value upon which empirical instrumental reason has to remain silent. The conflict arising between rival values cannot be rationally settled. As a result, individuals in society are forced to choose arbitrarily, according to their needs between political parties, classes, notions, moral causes and ideals.<sup>43</sup>

According to MacIntyre, Emotivism is a theory which seeks to define the state of affairs in modern society. In the modern social context, it attempts to overcome the impossible justification of subjective moral decision -posited in the Kantian moral imperative- by relying upon expressions whose content is itself based upon social roles. For this it calls upon roles carried out in society according to scientifically determined criteria whose content is devoid of moral expressions. Characterising the modern moral attitude are two prominent professions: the manager and the therapist. Both demonstrate the Emotivist (Enlightenment's) tradition's separation of fact from value, of professional life from private life.

The manager, whether engaged in the bureaucratic or the private sector, has a profession which demands the knowledge of available techniques allowing the maximisation of profit. This profession posits a predetermined end: the maximisation of profit within a given period of time. The methods used are purely rational and the results are calculable. The therapist, on the other hand, is trained to deal with human conflicts. The function consists in resolving neurotic problems and redirecting confused human capacities into channeled productive energy. This profession demands, just as the manager's, certain specialised scientific knowledge and poses at the same time a predefined end: efficiency . However, unlike the manager who works primarily with calculable matter, the therapist deals with individuals to whom he/she may only relate on rational and scientific level; questions relating to value judgements cannot be answered if they presuppose the giving of 'personal advice'. The therapist, like the manager, is not able to "engage in moral debate." The social function of both professions is expressed in terms of Scientific Method's separation between fact and value. Both characters are concerned with facts; the first with material availability, the second with the observable symptoms of a mental

disturbance; neither may allow an expression of values which belong to the subjective realm. MacIntyre defines Emotivism as a symptom of moral non-uniformity and the identification of a lack of a commonly accepted code of ethics wherein a lack of a common social 'end' is also indicated. However, unlike Weber, he does not view this as a common ground for subjective freedom, but a sign of deep disturbance and social disintegration.

The crisis of modern society is seen to lie in the reification of the social telos. The Emotivist tradition's characters are not defined through a fusion between social and personal attitudes and moral content; on the contrary they are defined primarily through a bifurcation of modern social existence between 'bureaucratic' organisation within which ends are imposed, not considered as subject to rational justifications, and a personal realm wherein judgement on values need not and cannot be subjected to rational inquiry. Here, judgements are not able to have an objective and impersonal socio-political expression. This crisis is not merely felt on the social level through the absence of a common telos, but is also present in the crisis of the individual who is seen to acquire a sovereignty which "in its own realm lost its traditional boundaries provided by a social identity and a view of human life as ordered to a given end."<sup>44</sup> For MacIntyre, the establishment of subjective morality signifies the deprivation of the self of its own communal qualities. Through the development of a value-free society, the self is seen to have become "criterionless, because the kind of telos in terms of which it once judged and acted is no longer thought to be credible."<sup>45</sup> This is the plight of the modern age which continues to function according to the type of rationality MacIntyre identified as "The Enlightenment Project."

### *The Enlightenment Project*

In *After Virtue*, as well as in other earlier articles<sup>46</sup> MacIntyre contends that the project of the philosophers of the Enlightenment to render morality rational has given rise to two specific -although interrelated- problems. On the one hand, the rationalisation of morality emphasised the already present process of social breakdown. On the other hand, it helped mask bureaucratic domination by giving the individual a false sense of liberty. For MacIntyre "individualist moral philosophers share in both the liberating and the constricting characteristics of bourgeois society.



They represent both the genuine advance in human liberation which it represents and its specific form of human alienation."<sup>47</sup> Individualist philosophy promotes the latter condition as it is incapable of developing a teleological theory of society. Its theory does not allow the bridging of the gap between the universal and the particular, nor can it consolidate the individual and the community. This is seen by MacIntyre to constitute the alienation of individuals from forms of social life by falsely objectifying their actions while endowing them with independent existence; they are equally convinced of being "free agents in areas of their life where the economic and social forms are in fact dictating the roles they live out;" both illusions, liberty and independence, contribute to "man's loss of the grasp of his own nature."<sup>48</sup>

The Enlightenment does not merely signify the rise in the value and status of science, but also represents the appearance of social class dissensions, and the intellectual and scientific pursuit of the understanding through reason, rather than through religious advocacy. Although this Age affected most of Europe, MacIntyre associates it with northern Europe where the secularisation of Protestantism representing the change in belief, hence the stage at which a new set of definitions of moral expressions was put in order. This is also accompanied by a shift in the status of the Latin language -which is very close in its interpretation of moral expressions to the Greek language- from being first to becoming second. MacIntyre's theory suggests that a breakdown in the coherence and unity of a set of moral expressions occurred with the development of the Protestant Reformation.<sup>49</sup> It is for this reason that he chooses Kant as representative of this Age and prominent developer of the project.

According to MacIntyre, Kant's theory of the categorical imperative acts at least in two ways as representative of the emerging individualist capitalist society. In the first instance, it renders individuals morally sovereign, enabling them to reject any outside moral authority, leaving them with a set of moral precepts that are laws which act in a negative rather than a positive manner. Kant's laws indicate what individuals should not do, rather than what they should. The adoption of a moral law is taken by the subjects to stop them from falling prey to their immoral inclinations, but not to give them a specific 'end', a purpose for which they must act in a moral way.

The second point stated by MacIntyre concerns the test of consistency. In Kant's doctrine of the categorical imperative no indication is made as to when and

why one must formulate a maxim and subject it to the test. In fact, Kant's theory appears to be dependent on an already existing morality from which subjects are to choose the maxims that appeal to them through the test of consistency. MacIntyre contends that this test cannot be considered reliable because one may invent through a play on words a maxim that will appear as universal while preventing through the citation of specific, unique situations its being applicable to others. The formulation of such a maxim would proceed as follows: "I may break my promises *only when* ...".<sup>50</sup> MacIntyre's formulation would not have been considered by Kant as a valid one, for the clause "only when" is conditional, and as such is not a valid categorical imperative. Also, it is the expression of an inclination rather than a deterrent from an inclination. Although theoretically MacIntyre's illustration of the unreliability of Kant's test is not convincing, one may agree, nevertheless, with the claim it attempts to raise concerning the unguaranteed consistency in the application of a subjectively determined morality within a social setting.

MacIntyre considers that the Enlightenment project was bound to fail due to its very structure and purpose. To illustrate this, he compares the Kantian morality to traditional Aristotelean ethics. Traditional morality distinguishes three stages of moral development: The original human nature in its crude un-informed state, the process of transformation, or the coming into being which consists mainly of the application of a set of moral rules for each social role, and finally, the realisation and perfection of this end. In comparison, the Kantian project fails as it places emphases on the first two stages, and completely disregards the third. For, as the ethical evaluation is necessarily based on a morality which is derived from the original crude nature of individuals, the realisation of human nature if it reached its telos cannot exist; in its very nature, the Kantian theory cannot indicate a moral telos, for the process begins and ends in the subject. The subject is already moral, but has no moral end outside of personally developed sphere of reflection and moral development. The Kantian theory being a mix of "novelty and tradition" expresses the necessity of a moral imperative, but distorts it by separating it from the social context. In its distorted form, traditional moral precepts become a series of arbitrary and subjective expressions which are devoid of any socially applicable dimension.

MacIntyre's critique of the subjectivity of the Kantian philosophy and its underlying presentation of a socially fragmented modern society resembles to a great extent Hegel's critique of the "reflective philosophy of subjectivity."<sup>51</sup> In a forward

to a book by Hinrich, Hegel describes the "evil of the *present time*" as "the *fortuitousness* and *caprice* of subjective feeling and its opinions associated with the *culture of reflective thought* which has proved to its own satisfaction that spirit is *incapable of knowing the truth*."<sup>52</sup> In a close study of the work of Kant, Fichte and Jacobi, Hegel set out to demonstrate that eighteenth and nineteenth century theories on "reflective subjectivity" are the intellectual expression of the social, political and religious breakdown of modern life.

In *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel defined the term reflection as "the action that establishes oppositions and goes from one to the other, but without effecting their combination and realizing their thorough going unity."<sup>53</sup> Reflection is understanding; it is primarily an analytical activity which allows the making of distinctions and the establishment of antitheses. It is also "thought" which "sticks to fixed determinations and the distinction of one thing from another: every such limited abstraction it treats as having a subsistence of its own."<sup>54</sup> The nature of the philosophy of "reflective subjectivity" cannot combine but separates (*entzweit*). It can divide (*trennt*) but cannot unite, it alienates but cannot reconcile.<sup>55</sup>

Hegel believed that the most pronounced statement of "reflective subjectivity" resides in Kant's critical philosophy. It is evident for Hegel that this "reflective" characteristic can be perceived in Kant's theory of knowledge presented in *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant's distinction between concept and possible experience effected a clear distinction between subject and object which brought his theory of knowledge to a halt, for this very separation indicates the impossibility of knowledge. Kant's distinction between the concepts or categories of understanding and of experiences forced him to distinguish between the things as we conceive them, and the things in themselves. These are posed as an absolute limit to the reflective activity of the knowing subject. This absolute opposition of subject and object renders the knowledge of the object by the subject impossible. Hegel viewed the Kantian critical theory of epistemology as a failure for it leads to an extreme type of subjectivism due to which the individual becomes incapable of knowing or acknowledging an objective end. According to Hegel, Kantian "objectivity" is "to a certain extent subjective. Thoughts, ... although universal and necessary categories, are only *our thoughts* - separated by an impassable gulf from the thing, as it exists apart from our knowledge. But the true objectivity of thinking means that the thoughts, far from being merely ours, must at the same time be the real essence of the things, of

whatever is an object to us."<sup>56</sup> The antithetical relation of subject and object pertains to a development of a subjectivity that is forever alienated from the objective knowable world. With regards to morality Hegel's assessment of Kant's second *Critique* states that:

As theoretical reason is opposed to objective sensuousness, so practical reason is opposed to practical sensuousness, to impulses and inclinations. Perfected morality must remain a beyond [ein jenseits]; for morality presupposes the difference of the particular and universal will. It is a struggle, the determination of the sensuous by the universal; the struggle can only take place when the sensuous will is not yet in conformity with the universal. The result is, therefore, that the aim of the moral will is to be attained only in infinite progress.<sup>57</sup>

For Hegel, the dichotomy of Kantian philosophy is expressed in both theoretical and practical reason. As theoretical reason seeks to bridge the gap between a-priori categories and a-posteriori sense-data, practical reason tries to bridge the gap between moral ideality and empirical reality. The opposition which separates the knowing subject from the empirical object is internalised in practical reason as the conflict between universal, objective categories and subjective desires of the individual.<sup>58</sup> The internalisation of the conflict gives rise to a shift from alienation in the world to self-alienation. It is both MacIntyre's and Hegel's view that the implementation of practical reason develops a fundamental contradiction where the realisation of morality is at one and the same time its negation. The separation of 'Is' from 'Ought' must occur if any moral action is to take place. The moral duty as a result becomes an unrealisable must (*Sollen*) or an unreachable beyondness (*Jenseits*). Life becomes an unbearable burden within which the individual aims to reach an end which is in principle unrealisable.

In spite of the similarities between Hegel's analysis of the philosophy of 'reflective subjectivity' and MacIntyre's analysis of the failure of the Enlightenment project, MacIntyre does not take a Hegelian stance. Much of their differences lie in their vision of the theory of the historical evolution of the individual in society. Hegel's view of history as progress towards the rational consciousness of subjective freedom allows him to regard philosophical "reflective subjectivity" not simply "as a false direction in philosophy, but as a trend which is *necessary* and whose errors also bear the "stamp of necessity."<sup>59</sup> Historically, Hegel attempted to show that



"reflective subjectivity" is the product of the contradictions of the present and that this constituted its historical justification and its historical achievement. However, as a provider of a solution to the contradiction it exposed, "reflective subjectivity" is a failure. This is clearly stated in Hegel's study of the second and third *Critiques* of Kant's philosophy. The assessment Hegel makes of the latter demonstrates its incapacity to reconcile the very contradiction it exposed.

MacIntyre on the other hand, sees historical evolution - especially in terms of the evolution of the social formations and its accompanying fracturing of moral language - as a decline, a distortion of human consciousness expressed in the distortions found in moral discourse. Reason and its essential role as the telos of social existence and interaction, is distorted, its significance and its clearness of purpose within the social context is obscured as individuals become aware of their own being as subjects and are alienated from society. The rise of subjective consciousness, as the Hegelian concept of historical progress, appears for MacIntyre to have taken the place of the collective will exemplified in its socially conceived notion as virtue. MacIntyre conceives of subjective consciousness as what is responsible for the rise of relativism and perspectivism,<sup>60</sup> for in its liberal context, subjectivity comes to embody the individualisation of claims to truth. For Hegel, the process of subjective consciousness commenced with the appearance of religion when the individual while avowing devotion to God became separated from the community. MacIntyre sees religion as much of a unifier as the Polis was in the Greek city-state, and considers the actual division to have set in with the arrival of the Protestant Reformation<sup>61</sup> which provided individuals with completely altered views of human nature and its telos. Therefore, what Hegel qualified as a distinct realisation of subjective consciousness developing against the community's, and later the Church's, abuse of its powers, MacIntyre sees as a disintegration in the unity of social practice of the virtues.

Moreover, MacIntyre plainly objects to the fact that there is, or has been, a notion of an 'individual', for he sees the "project of Enlightenment" as the "inventor" of the "*individual* ." Second, MacIntyre also objects to the notion of rights which he defines as those "which are alleged to belong to human beings as such and which are cited as a reason for holding that people ought not to be interfered with in their pursuit of life, liberty and happiness." He also finds it odd that there should be "human rights." He adds that rights attached "to human beings simply *qua* human beings" is

a concept that did not arise before the close of the middle ages, a fact which suggests that "there are not such rights, and belief in them is one with belief in witches and in unicorns."<sup>62</sup> It is clear from MacIntyre's argument that there is no concept of an individual that can exist outwith a distinct society, and the rights for such a fictitious entity are equally illusory, just as the notion of a subjective morality is an outrageous lie. Hence, MacIntyre cannot follow Hegel into a post-Kantian theory of 'Sittlichkeit' because for him individuals are incapable of self-determination, of freedom of thought, or action. The Enlightenment project does not indicate a step towards higher subjective consciousness, rather it signifies the absolute break with tradition, a break which he sees as almost irredeemable for it suggests in its very being the first stage in the process of social, and hence moral disintegration, and of an overall dissolution of the value or quality of human life. Unlike Hegel, MacIntyre cannot view this development in a positive light, for it is not the evolution of a tradition, but it signifies the rise of a rationality which seeks to destroy the very fibre of what constitutes a tradition;<sup>63</sup> therefore, unlike Hegel, the rise of subjectivity does not imply the coming-into-being of unity, but signifies the beginning of the end. However, it has to be conceded that Hegel's 'universal' is equivalent to MacIntyre's 'tradition', and hence, it may be said that Hegel also refuses to acknowledge the possibility of freedom and self-determination outwith the society one inhabits. The distinctness of MacIntyre's position from Hegel's lies precisely in his refusal to acknowledge the 'necessity' of subjectivity. Hegel would contend that MacIntyre's position betrays the horror and frustration with which MacIntyre regards the state of affairs that so-called 'individualism' has wrought upon society.

Like Hegel, MacIntyre's theory of the individual and society is Aristotelean in character. Individuals within society are not creators of their 'self', for the self is defined according to the social position it occupies in society, the practice of which determines its success or failure as this or that social role. Their morality is not purely their own, it is not an expression of their being as human beings, but depends on the degree to which they are able to execute their social role, itself a means toward the internalisation of what constitutes a virtue. Self expression acquires a distinct value when it is actualised in the world, i.e. in terms of socio-political and economic participation. Hence, for individuals to attempt to stage their own life as their 'end', rather than having this 'end' be set in the community, is the primary factor in the breakdown of the unity of the social formation. However, unlike Hegel, MacIntyre expresses a Christian understanding of the will, which prompts to him to declare that

individuals are devoid of free-will and that all choices are good if they serve the telos of the community, and bad when made in terms of individual interests. In his view, the *modern* self has "no necessary social content and no necessary social identity" and it can be anything, "because it *is* in and for itself nothing." It is therefore "no more than 'a peg' on which the clothes of the role are hung."<sup>64</sup>

Although MacIntyre objects to modern Emotivist identification of the self, and commends the Aristotelean model, he does not recognise that both definitions are quite similar. On the one hand, the Aristotelean social entity is subordinated to the social role ascribed to it. The "judgement" of which MacIntyre boasts is not its own, but is based upon the socially set criteria. For MacIntyre, individuals are constituted as social roles, entities whose shape is entirely molded by their social environment, and their self-actualisation is thereby limited to the adequate expression of the social role they live out in society. In both cases, the self appears as an essentially *empty* and transparent *vessel*, whose content varies with respect to the factors which surround and occupy it. On the other hand, MacIntyre's definition of individuals of the Enlightenment maintains that they are in essence vacuous, in need of a social context and a social content for each of them to acquire an identity, a self. From this it can be deduced that for MacIntyre, individuals at any given time are socially defined entities and can therefore have no distinct character of their own.

#### *MacIntyre's Alternative*

It is MacIntyre's contention that ever since the belief in Aristotelean teleology has been discredited there appeared several attempts to justify morality. Through Nietzsche's critique of the plausibility of modern moral philosophies, MacIntyre vindicates the validity of the Aristotelean philosophy. Nietzsche contended that the morality of the European society since the classics has been a sham, a disguise for the will to power, and showed that its plausibility could not be rationally justified. According to MacIntyre, the Nietzschean concept of the "great man" "represents individualism's final attempt to escape from its own consequences."<sup>65</sup> Its stance "turns out not to be a mode of escape from or an alternative to the conceptual scheme of liberal individualist modernity, but rather one more representative moment in its internal unfolding."<sup>66</sup> By eliminating the plausibility of Nietzsche's moral theory,



MacIntyre is now able to suggest that an alternative road to that tread by modernity consists in the restatement of the Aristotelean tradition in a way "that restores intelligibility and rationality to our moral and social attitudes and commitments."<sup>67</sup>

According to MacIntyre, the rendering of the Aristotelean tradition "rational" requires the elimination of three incoherent characteristics in Aristotelean philosophy. First, Aristotelean teleology presupposes the presence of an irrational theory of metaphysical biology. The latter is primarily expressed in Aristotle's belief that some human beings are by nature free and others slaves, and that "man is by nature a political animal." Second, it has been noted by Barker<sup>68</sup> among others that the Aristotelean teleology is limited in its own concern with the city-state as an 'end' while ignoring the growing expansionism of the Roman Empire whose development presented a glaring alternative; hence, MacIntyre viewing the same limits of the Aristotelean teleology suggests that the city-state be viewed in "an historical perspective as only one -even if a very important one- in a series of social and political forms in and through which the kind of self which can exemplify the virtues can be found and educated." Thirdly, MacIntyre disputes Aristotle's dislike of conflict thereby ordering its elimination or management. MacIntyre's argument is surprisingly Hegelian in the sense that he does see that it is only "through conflict that we learn what our ends and purposes are."<sup>69</sup>

MacIntyre proposes to perform his enterprise through a particular study of the history of morality by dividing it in four particular periods: the Homeric sagas, the classical city-state, the medieval period and the utilitarian period of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. This historical study is meant to show the regularity in the presence of 'virtues' as qualities in society. He attempts to demonstrate the presence of a common feature in history: that of practices. The concept of a practice becomes paramount to his theory as it identifies the presence of virtues with their social implementation. For MacIntyre, a "practice" signifies any activity promoting a social good. Practice is, therefore, not simply the mechanical or technical exercise of chess playing or baseball batting, it represents a *good*, considered internal to a given 'telos'. It is 'internal' in the sense that its very application implies an *end*, not associated with external goods such as money and fame, but to 'internal' discipline of the soul; the discipline in virtues refers to such qualities as sportsmanship, honesty and justice. The pleasure of executing the exercise should not be separated from its purpose; it is therefore 'internal' pleasure. It is similar to Aristotle's view of the good life, which is



not an end that is accomplished through a particular deed, rather it is the very practice of virtues that is at once the *means* and the *end*. For Aristotle the private practice of virtues is also internal to the *social end* which is also the good life for the individual, thus allowing the *end* of individuals and of society to be one.

Although MacIntyre attempts to rid Aristotle's definition of human nature of its metaphysical biology, he nevertheless maintains a definition that is identical with it. More specifically, MacIntyre's definition of human nature is itself based upon a metaphysical biology.<sup>70</sup> In refusing to accept the Enlightenment Project's definition of human nature, and more specifically, the Kantian *a priori* concerning the equality between the individual will and the universal will, and by asserting that this Kantian *a priori* is itself an invention, MacIntyre bases his conception of human nature on a theory which denies individuals the capacity to define their sense of self outwith socio-political context.<sup>71</sup> Both Aristotle's and MacIntyre's assertions correspond to postulates that are considered true or necessary irrespective of experience or anterior to it, "in other words not derived from experience and considered valid."<sup>72</sup> These are assertions that are normally rejected by scientific reason primarily for their prevalent arbitrariness, and are ruled out of order. In this sense, MacIntyre, while attempting to render Aristotelean philosophy applicable to modern definition of human nature by ridding it of all arbitrary definition based upon metaphysical biology, commits an identical error when espousing a definition of the self that is equally arbitrary, based upon an implicit definition of human nature that is metaphysically biological.

So far MacIntyre's solution fails primarily because of the impossibility to separate the elements of metaphysical biology from Aristotle's teleology. This impossibility, I contend, is due to the direct relationship existing between the concept of reason and its capacity to directly characterise human nature. Aristotle's teleology cannot be separated from a distinct biological definition of human nature that would make it necessary for individuals to seek society and political association. To do so is to allow Aristotle's theory to fall into incoherence and arbitrariness for how are individuals to seek a social telos if it is not in their nature to do so? This failure is further complicated by the definition that MacIntyre gives to the modern self. In the first instance, his definition appears in line with the classics. However, in attempting to separate Aristotelean ethics from its metaphysical biology, he not only claims that the self is a vacuous entity, but more importantly, that this very self is empty of all natural inclinations toward being socially motivated. As a result, MacIntyre's

solution appears to be itself guilty of proffering a distinct definition of human nature that is as metaphysically biological as Aristotle's, but which is ultimately an impoverished version, since it denies any nature content whatever; MacIntyre's individuals cannot even claim to be social 'by nature'. In fact, MacIntyre's rejection of subjectivity as the basis for the disintegration of socio-political unity, and his emphasis on the virtues are reminiscent of Plato. Could MacIntyre be expressing a Platonic *idea* of the virtues rather than an Aristotelean idea of the *mean* ? This may well be the only answer to the characterisation of his historical study of morality.

MacIntyre's historical study of morality is based on the theory that moral discourse becomes less intelligible as social formations are replaced by others, the latter representing but a distorted copy of the original.<sup>73</sup> It is evident that, in this sense, the rise of individualism does not reveal the necessary presence of "individuality" as such, but is rather the expression of a distorted and misunderstood moral language. Also, such a distortion is seen as independent from any specific 'individualist' reaction, for it is brought on by *time*. In this denial of any presence of 'individualist' action, the conflict between individual and society cannot take on the same significance as it does for Hegel and Marx. It cannot be interpreted as a cry for freedom, for there can be no such thing; it is merely the expression of a morally distorted society. Similarly, society can never become oppressive, it is merely the confusion brought on by a distortion of the moral language that is being expressed.

MacIntyre's characterisation of the individual resembles to a great extent a Platonic shortcoming. Barker discusses Plato's destruction of the basis of personality by demonstrating the implied vacuity of the self prevalent in the citizens of the *Republic*. For Barker, "too often it is true that it is an ineffective, unindividual type of mind which identifies itself with a wide range of interests" as the character of such a citizen. MacIntyre's assessment of the individual can be objected to, as does Barker to the Platonic idea of the citizen when he states: "we must first know ourselves as separate individuals, in order to transcend such knowledge, and to know ourselves as part of a wider order, and as serving a wider purpose. It is exactly this power of knowing ourselves as separate individuals which Plato really destroys."<sup>74</sup> Plato does so through the abolition of property, an action which has been interpreted by Hegel to constitute Plato's denial to humanity of a distinct sense of subjectivity.

Like Plato and Aristotle, MacIntyre does not seem concerned with the

oppressive nature of the "distorted" virtues. Although his solution points back to a society wherein the virtues expressed were coherent, he ignores the oppressive nature of these societies which abounded not only through slavery, but also through state oppression of farmers and artisans. Although Aristotle did associate the value of the virtues with *man* rather than with his Homeric social function, he nevertheless, considered *men* of virtue as relating to one class of Athenian noblemen. Hence, unconsciously Aristotle continued to express Homeric standards. The definition of an "Athenian nobleman" did not include those who were not owners of slaves, nor did it include those Hellenistic farmers who lived on the outskirts of Athens. Even if Aristotle was not expressing a Homeric evaluation of virtues, would not the distortion that occurred in the transition from the Homeric society to that of fourth century Greece be a hindrance to the purity of the Aristotelean virtues, even by MacIntyre's standards? Undoubtedly they must if MacIntyre's theory is to remain consistent, thus admitting that even Aristotelean philosophy is not the perfect model of society which MacIntyre claims it to be.

In *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel makes a distinction between substantial morality and reflective morality. Substantial morality represents the principle of common Greek morality which is already established in society and has in general the relation of the "substantial;" it is, therefore, socially maintained and is divine. On the other hand, reflective morality is the expression of the subjective *will* of the individual. It is the action based upon individual reflection and not on the prescriptions of state institutions. It is the action of individuals which stems from their own convictions, and after moral deliberation. Individuals come themselves to a decision and determine their actions accordingly.

This distinction is not found in Plato's writing. Plato's concern concentrated on the need for subjective evolution in relation to the state, but he neglected the recognition of freedom of the individual conscience and the right to subjective reflective morality. Although Plato includes the individual subject in the empirical actions of the will, he does so while conceiving of the individual in the universal sense. Plato's systems of reality in the moral realm includes all the functions pertaining to the common wealth, and the supplying of daily individual needs. He, however, relegates these functions to the realm of external necessities, hence, as lying outside of the Objective Idea; they are found universally without being developed out of the Idea of the mind itself.



Plato's theory of the state is basically concerned with the notion of *justice*. In speaking of justice Plato meant "that the mind in its totality makes for itself a law as evidence of the existence of its freedom. In a highly abstract sense my personality, my altogether abstract freedom, is present in property."<sup>75</sup> Since justice is for Plato the entire being which realises itself when each individual learns to do the assigned tasks to a level of perfection, then it is only as "determined individuality that man reaches what is law for him; only thus does he belong to the universal Spirit of the State, coming in it to the universal of himself as a "this".<sup>76</sup> What Plato calls 'universal' comes into being and is actualised necessarily outside of the *Idea*, while expressing a content which is identical to it. Hence, the actualisation of the *Idea* must be done through a function which is a means, the latter in turn acquires its intent through the subjective will of the individual, within which the Objective Idea is necessarily present, and which demands an act of subjective reflective decision for its enactment.

According to Hegel, the "individual conscience proceeds from the subjectivity of free-will, connects itself with the whole, chooses a position for itself, and thus makes itself a moral fact."<sup>77</sup> This aspect of individuality is ignored by Plato who felt that this very subjective quality of individual social existence is what had wrought the ruin of Greece. It is therefore not surprising that MacIntyre who seems to have adopted a Platonic view of historical social evolution, despite his criticism of Plato,<sup>78</sup> proceeds to deny individual subjectivity as well. MacIntyre's theory of teleology has succeeded in inheriting the shortcoming found in classical Greek philosophy. While this explains the criteria according to which human nature is defined, as well as the reason why MacIntyre develops such a theory, it does not explain how this theoretical development effects the theoretical outcome of his solution.

MacIntyre set out to achieve his objective through several steps. First, he attempted to separate Aristotelean teleology from metaphysical biology, hence from the positing of a teleology in nature. To achieve this he forwarded a theory of the virtues. In basing his theory on the virtues MacIntyre's success is twofold: through a historical study of the nature of virtues, he affirms the presence of virtues in society rather than through a teleology in nature, implying that the presence of virtues transcends social formations. Also, the very nature of the virtues which ascribes them to action, or social roles, rather than to a metaphysical quality in humanity,



allows MacIntyre to bridge the gap between 'Is' and 'Ought'. It does so as it shows that the evaluation of humanity is done in terms of the results of human actions rather than in terms of some inpalpable quality whose evaluation varies with the personal criteria or reflection of the subject. Evaluative criteria based on the practice of activities places the evaluativeness in the social realm and divorces it from the subjective realm, thereby denying the individual the freedom of subjective self-determination. It is, therefore, imperative for MacIntyre to deny the individual this subjectivity in order for him to reach a solution which allows him to bridge the fact-value gap.

The theory of virtues presupposes a social teleology. Individuals are bound to aim toward "the good life" in society according to the virtues which are posited in society as means. Individuals' telos is bound to society, and to the achievement of the virtues, which implies that they are basically social and aim to live a 'good life' within society, guided by social rules. This definition of a telos lies in contradiction with the type of nature MacIntyre attributes to individuals. For, according to Aristotle, reason is the human telos within which individuals also define their nature. Reason, telos and human nature are all social; the structure of human teleology is syllogistically derived wherein the telos is reached through a subjective acknowledgement and positing of its objectivity in the means, which is also an object through which the telos is realised, if only externally. For Aristotle, reason is social teleology, human beings *are social* by nature; therefore their telos is reason. Whereas MacIntyre states: Virtues are social, individuals *practice* virtues, individuals *are* social. For MacIntyre individuals, as ontological entities, are essentially neither virtuous nor social, they become both as each *practices* virtues in society.

A question is bound to arise at this point: if individuals are neither virtuous nor social, why would they enter a society and practice the stated virtues, positing them as their telos? Only a Hobbesian may answer this question; an Aristotelean may not. The Hobbesian would say that it is the necessity to preserve one's life which would prompt each individual to enter into the commonwealth and accept all arbitrary laws of society except those which might put this life into danger. As to MacIntyre, the answer consists in the fact that individuals were never outside of society, they therefore have never made the choice to enter it. This answer remains to lack an answer to the second part, why would individuals posit the virtues as means, why would they not posit material accumulation, agriculture,...etc as means to the same

end? MacIntyre remains silent.

MacIntyre's refusal to recognise the presence of human subjectivity has still further implications. His view of humanity as essentially malleable has so far been shown to signify the presence of the basic traits of the Hobbesian liberal definition of human nature. From this implication rises another which can be expressed in answer to the following question: how does MacIntyre envisage the coming into being of the transition from the modern social formation to a society which has adopted his solution for a 'rationalised' Aristotelean theory of teleology? In other words, how are individuals, entities incapable of self-determination, to choose the road toward the virtues when they are presently living within a society which corresponds to their nature (hence the nature MacIntyre attributes to them)? MacIntyre's answer in *After Virtue* is rather pessimistic, for he suggests a solution similar to that made at the turning point in history which took place after the decline of the Roman Empire, suggesting a construction of "new forms of community within which the moral life could be sustained so that both morality and civility might survive the ... new dark ages which are already upon us."<sup>79</sup> The construction of these new communal forms, he suggests, is to be made through a slow evolution in the history of virtues; as to the latter's possibility for survival, MacIntyre states "if the tradition of the virtues was able to survive the horrors of the last dark ages, we are not entirely without grounds for hope."<sup>80</sup> MacIntyre's solution reflects again a Platonist view of history. According to Plato, society is able to recover its purity through a slow and steady return to its origins. However, neither Plato nor MacIntyre are able to suggest how individuals are to decide to turn from their present society towards another which is guided by social virtues when they lack any form of subjective will, and are entirely formed by society.

MacIntyre's analysis suggests that society is now at an impasse awaiting the miraculous appearance of a "very different St Benedict."<sup>81</sup> This is a conclusion that would certainly reflect the reasons for which postmodernism raised its objections to modernity and its impasse. For MacIntyre, like Weber before him, is a thinker of his age, readily sensing and depicting the dilemma of the individual of his time. While Weber predicted freedom as choice, MacIntyre denounced it as a sham. The following Part deals with the type of freedom postmodernism senses as possible and desirable in the present, and which appears as a revolt or a renunciation of the positions of both authors. Theirs is a flight from purely capitalist and the purely

moral, but falls short of a possible Hegelian synthesis. To an illustration of this theory of freedom of the present we now turn.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Max Weber, *From Max Weber*, trans. H.H. Gerth, and C. Wright Mills, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1947) pp.129-156

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 142

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 143

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 139

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 140

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>In *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. A.R. Henderson, and Talcott Parsons, (London: William Hodge & Co. Ltd., 1947), Weber defines two types of rationality, 'formal' and 'substantive'. Formal rationality designates "the extent of quantitative calculation or accounting which is technically possible and which is actually applied." p. 170.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 329.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 359.

<sup>19</sup>It should be emphasised here that this discussion on what Charisma means for Weber is only approached in view to illustrate the dichotomous character identified by Weber, rather than a thorough discussion of the concept. For a selection of Weber's short papers on Charisma, cf. *Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building*, ed. S.N. Eisenstadt, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago press, 1968).

<sup>20</sup>Weber, *From Max Weber*, op. cit., p. 151.

<sup>21</sup>On this Weber states: "To the person who cannot bear the fate of the times like a man, one must say: may he rather return silently, without the usual publicity build-up of renegades, but simply and plainly. the arms of the old churches are opened widely and compassionately for him. ... One way or another he has to bring his 'intellectual sacrifice' -that is inevitable. If he can really do it, we shall not rebuke him. For such an intellectual sacrifice in favor of an unconditional religious devotion is ethically quite a different matter than the evasion of the plain duty of intellectual integrity, which sets in if one lacks the courage to clarify one's own ultimate standpoint and rather facilitates this duty by feeble relative judgements. In my eyes, such religious return stands higher than the academic prophecy, which does not clearly realize that in the lecture-rooms of the university no other virtue holds but plain intellectual integrity." Ibid., pp.155-156.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., cf. Weber's discussion on 'integrity' which "compels us to state that for the many who today tarry for new prophets and saviors, the situation is the same as resounds in the beautiful Edomite watchman's song of the period of exile that has been included among Isaiah's oracles ... the people to whom this was said has enquired and tarried for more than two millennia, and we are shaken when we realize its fate. From this we want to draw the lesson that nothing is gained by yearning and tarrying alone, and we shall act differently. We shall set to work and meet the 'demands of the day,' in human relations as well as in our vocation. This, however, is plain and simple, if each finds and obeys the demon who holds the fibers of his very life."

<sup>23</sup>On this Hegel states: "...the genuinely free will, which includes free choice as suspended, is conscious to itself that its content is intrinsically firm and fast, and knows it at the same time to be thoroughly its own. A will on the contrary, which remains standing on the grade of option, even supposing it does decide in favour of what is in import right and true, is always haunted by the conceit that it might, if it had so pleased, have decided in favour of the reverse course. When more narrowly examined, free choice is seen to be a contradiction to this extent that its form and content



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stand in antithesis. The matter of choice is given, and known as a content dependent not on the will itself, but on outward circumstances. In reference to such a given content, freedom lies only in the form of choosing, which, as it is only a freedom in form, may consequently be regarded as freedom only in supposition. On an ultimate analysis it will be the content that the will finds to its hand, can alone account for the will giving its decision for the one and not the other of the two alternatives". G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Logic*, trans. William Wallace, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), pp.205-206.

<sup>24</sup>Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons, (London: Unwin, 1987), pp. 17-18. Here, Weber defines capitalism as "identical with the pursuit of profit, and forever renewed profit, by means of continuous, rational, capitalistic enterprise." Moreover, "capitalistic economic action [is] one which rests on the expectation of profit by the utilization of opportunities for exchange, that is on (formally) peaceful chances of profit. Acquisition by force (formally and actually) follows its own particular laws, and it is not expedient, however little one can forbid this, to place it in the same category with action which is, in the last analysis, oriented to profits from exchange."

<sup>25</sup>Cf. notes 21 and 22.

<sup>26</sup>From Max Weber, op. cit., pp.196-244

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 82-83

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., pp. 79-80

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 229-230

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p.82

<sup>32</sup>For a full discussion by Weber, cf., *From Max Weber*, ibid., Section VIII "Bureaucracy and Law", pp. 216-221.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p.84

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 85

<sup>35</sup>*Protestant Ethic*, op.cit., p. 181.

<sup>36</sup>Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, (London: Duckworth, 1981), p. 17.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 18

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., pp.22-25.

<sup>44</sup>For further on the loss of traditional sovereignty of the individual and the nature of "false liberty", cf. A. MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics* (1966), and *Against the Self-Images of the Age* (1971).

<sup>45</sup>MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, op.cit., p. 32.

<sup>46</sup>C.f. Part II of a collected articles by MacIntyre entitled *Against the Self-Images of the Age*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1971).

<sup>47</sup>*After Virtue*, op.cit., p. 47.

<sup>48</sup>MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics*, (New York: MacMillan Co., 1966), p. 212.

<sup>49</sup>According to MacIntyre, "an Aristotelean moral psychology and christian view of the moral law are synthesized even if somewhat unsatisfactorily in Thomist ethics. But the Protestant Reformation changes this. First, because human beings are totally corrupt their nature cannot be a foundation for true morality. And next because men cannot judge God, we obey God's commandments not because God is good but simply because He is God. So the moral law is a collection of arbitrary fiats unconnected with anything we may want or desire", *Against the Self-Images of the Age*, ibid., pp. 123-24.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>51</sup>G.F.W. Hegel, Foreword to H. Fr. W. Hinrich, *Die Religion Im Inneren Verhältnisse*

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Zur Wissenschaft (1822), trans. A.V. Miller, in *Beyond Epistemology: New Studies in the Philosophy of Hegel*, ed. F.G. Weiss (The Hague: Marinus Nijhoff, 1974), p. 240.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>G.F.W. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3 Vols., trans. Speirs and Sanderson, (New York: Humanities Press, 1968), Vol. I., p. 191.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>55</sup>Charles T. Taylor, *Journeys to Selfhood*, op.cit., p. 42.

<sup>56</sup>Cited in Taylor, *ibid.*

<sup>57</sup>G.F.W. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. Haldane and Simson, (New York: Humanities Press, 1968), Vol. 3, p. 461

<sup>58</sup>Taylor, op.cit., p. 45.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Cf. *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, (London: Duckworth, 1988), p. 352.

<sup>61</sup>For a complete statement of MacIntyre's view on the history of Ethics, cf. *Against the Self-Images...*, op.cit., pp. 123-124.

<sup>62</sup>*After Virtue*, op.cit., pp. 59, 66, 67.

<sup>63</sup>*Whose J...?* op.cit., pp. 326-355.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., pp. 30-31.

<sup>65</sup>*After Virtue*, op.cit., p. 240

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., pp. 240-41

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 241

<sup>68</sup>Ernest Barker, *The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle*, (London: Dover, 1975), p. 226. According to Barker, "teleology taught him (Aristotle) that there had been a development of the state: it did not teach him that there was a development still to come. On the contrary, it led him to see in the city-state the final goal and completion of all political progress, and to shut his eyes to the universal empire, which even in his own days was already beginning, and which was destined to endure as long as the name of the Roman Empire was used among men..."

<sup>69</sup>*After Virtue*, op.cit., p. 153

<sup>70</sup>What is referred to here by MacIntyre as 'metaphysical biology' is a particularly personal interpretation since MacIntyre himself does not specifically give any detailed explanation of this concept in either *After Virtue*, where he discusses the point, or in any of his earlier or subsequent writings. Due to this fact, the discussion concerning this particular point remains tentative and has been used in the spirit of seeking to give a complete account of MacIntyre's 'alternative', rather than to critique his discussion.

<sup>71</sup>MacIntyre's *a priori* is not only present in *After Virtue* where it is expressed quite strongly, but also in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, where his idea of tradition, although incorporating the value of knowledge and consciousness in history, remains attached to a theory of virtues necessarily defined within the confines of a socio-political structure, and therefore the theory of the self and its content continues to make necessary the presence of a socio-political structure for this self to be defined. The *a priori* that the self is itself a socially defined entity therefore holds.

<sup>72</sup>Arnold Brecht, *Political Theory*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton U.P., 1967), p. 99.

<sup>73</sup>Cf. the distortion of meaning in time developed in MacIntyre's *Short History of Ethics*, & the Theory of Tradition in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*

<sup>74</sup>*Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle*, op.cit., p. 156.

<sup>75</sup>Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, op.cit., Vol II, p. 104.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>78</sup>See *After Virtue* (1985) Ch. 11., and *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (1988).

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., pp. 244-45.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

**Part III. Postmodernity and Subjectivity:  
an Unfinished Project**

Postmodernism, as an intellectual movement, appears to express a variegated critique of modernity, a modernity which goes beyond what MacIntyre defines as the Enlightenment project. Postmodernism is specifically concerned with the socio-political and psychological wounds inflicted upon the modern individual, all of which stem from living in the 'iron cage of modernity'.<sup>1</sup> The 'post' in postmodernism expresses a distinct sense of *disbelief*, "implying (in the form of conclusion, or mere premonition) that the long and earnest efforts of modernity have been misguided, undertaken under false pretences and bound to -sooner or later- run their course; that, in other words, it is modernity itself that will demonstrate (if it has not demonstrated yet) and demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt, its impossibility, the vanity of its hopes and the wastefulness of its works."<sup>2</sup> According to Zygmunt Bauman, postmodernist theories are significant in so far as they offer the opportunity to study more fully questions concerning value-relativism, while pointing out that this problem was a necessary product of modernity's quest for the establishment of a universal and objectively founded moral code. For Bauman, modernity succeeded in demonstrating "the uncanny capacity for thwarting self-examination; it wrapped the mechanisms of self-reproduction with a veil of illusions without which those mechanisms, being what they were, could not function properly; modernity had to set itself targets which could not be reached, in order to reach what reach it could."<sup>3</sup> Postmodernism responds to this state of affairs by seeking to 'tear off' the the mask of 'illusions', thereby pointing out "certain pretences as false and certain objectives as neither attainable nor, for that matter, desirable."<sup>4</sup>

However, unlike MacIntyre whose solution for the appearance of value-relativism lead him to consider adapting Aristotelean ethics to modern Western society, postmodernists seem to have adopted a more novel approach. While not entirely abandoning modernity's concerns with progress, they nevertheless reject "the typically modern ways" of going about its problems in so far as they do not seek to introduce solutions which are based on the philosophical search for universals, absolutes, and foundations in theory.<sup>5</sup> As such, postmodern critique seeks to discredit modernity's reason-centred theories on their own terms, and attempts to develop solutions that would prove adaptable to contemporary society. It does so through a questioning of the variety of roads which seem to have led to the Age of Reason or Enlightenment. This includes the popular *Weltanschauung* concerning reason and history, and the progress of reason in history dominating modern Western thought since the nineteenth century.



Before proceeding any further in discussing postmodernism's approach, it is necessary to give a brief definition of what postmodernism, more specifically, French post-structuralism, identifies as the elements defining modernity. They are critical of structuralism both in terms of linguistics (Saussure) and anthropology (Lévi-Strauss), and this because structuralism claims to have brought an end to philosophy in its attempts to demonstrate that philosophical speculation is unnecessary. For just as the physical sciences replaced philosophical speculation in the field of matter, structuralism posited itself as the human science to supersede philosophical reflection on human nature.<sup>6</sup> However, postmodernists agree with the structuralists that metaphysical assumptions can no longer be genuinely believed, but see the structuralists as having failed to overcome the attachment to latent metaphysical concepts.<sup>7</sup>

In its preoccupation with metaphysics, postmodernism is equally concerned with modernity's humanism, a philosophical position, as we have demonstrated in Part I of this study, which places mankind at the centre of the universe. They follow Nietzsche in contending that the only way to save ourselves from the disillusionment of our unfulfilled ideals -that is to be like God- is to free ourselves from this logocentric definition of humanity. To do so they attempt to explode the Kantian definition of the 'universal ego'. Alongside Nietzsche's critique of humanism lies that of Martin Heidegger whose effect on French existentialism can hardly be denied. Heidegger's 'Letter on Humanism' (1947) primarily aims to distance the philosopher's work from Sartre's tendency to read it as philosophical anthropology.<sup>8</sup> Heidegger's preoccupation with the creation of new vocabulary aimed to avoid psychologistic terms such as 'consciousness' and 'subjectivity' consistently employed by Sartre. To this extent, French postmodernists appear critical of Sartre's humanism, moving away from a philosophy whose primary *raison d'être* is the analysis of human nature in terms of 'consciousness', toward an emphasis on linguistic structures and social practices. Moreover, in terms of political ideology, phenomenologists such as Sartre and Merleau-Ponty appear outdated in spite of their later adherence to Marxism; here too, Marxism, or at least this anthropological form of Marxism, is rejected because it is in its very nature logocentric, and thus humanist.

The postmodernists' "incredulity towards metanarratives," i.e. towards a single interpretation -whether in terms of history, political, economic or anthropological accounts- of the progress of Western reason, takes its critique of modernity, and especially modernity's dependence on science, from Nietzsche's

proclamation 'God is dead'.<sup>9</sup> This *prise de conscience* establishes that the Kantian 'individual will' as the 'universal will', which also represents the 'divine will', no longer applies, and that if God is dead, so is all unified, homogeneous will. With the disappearance of the universal will, comes the fragmentation of knowledge, and more specifically self-knowledge, for knowledge of reality can no longer be based on the knowledge of *my* self (because *my* will is not necessarily the universal will and therefore has no basis to measure its authenticity or accuracy). Self-knowledge, originally a product of a stable relationship between Subject and Object of knowledge, becomes problematic as the moment of *anagnorisis*, or recognition, which normally established the Identity of Subject, enters into crisis.<sup>10</sup>

This knowledge-uncertainty is socially expressed in terms of a crisis of judgement. In their reading of Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, postmodernists point to the distinction between analytic and synthetic *a priori* which is taken to correspond to a distinction between determining and reflective judgement. In a determining judgement the act or event of judging is previously determined such that the Subject of consciousness does not act at all; all judgement is determined according to a structure and a method that is itself predetermined.<sup>11</sup> Reflective judgement, on the other hand, can only occur according to subjective criteria, i.e. without a pre-determined theory. In the pursuit of freedom, postmodernists favour reflective judgement as it defines the individual's ability to judge according to subjective criteria. Replacing freedom as action, judgements are then replaced by the act of judging, and the *form* is replaced by the *event*.<sup>12</sup> This reading of Kant's third *Critique* seeks to direct the operation of reason away from its inner coherent form, i.e. away from scientific knowledge, to a form of 'narrative' knowledge. As with Kant, knowledge is therefore not based on the nature of the 'thing in itself', but unlike Kant, it is also not based upon a 'universal' will. Rather it is based upon the subject's 'narrative' of a given event, the telling of which is responsible for the changing of the narrator's consciousness, and hence the production of new knowledge.<sup>13</sup>

Postmodernism points out the return of the self, in its quest for self identification, to a state of aimless self-fulfilment and self-negation; it is conceived of as struggling against the morbid sentiment that the world is infinite, and that it will never come to accede to the day of judgement. It awaits yet another *renaissance*, a rebirth, which cannot resemble the Humanist return to the classics because what constitutes the present appears as a mere fragment of the past, a simulation, a fake, a

replica of a history to which the self can no longer belong, nor does it, in any meaningful manner, express its adherence.<sup>14</sup> This sentiment is exemplified in Foucault's reflection on the Kantian text "Was heisst Aufklärung?," or "What is Enlightenment?," in which Foucault comments that what made this text meaningful was Kant's preoccupation with his *present*, which indicated a new type of consciousness, one which looks in the present to comprehend the self's own nature, not as a historical product, but a product of *a* history, of an event.<sup>15</sup> Here, each object of study becomes the subject of its own historical narrative. No longer objectified by history, it becomes its own author and subject thereby seizing in full force an identity that is of its own making. The act of narrating one's own history is therefore significant, for the self is only conscious of its own determination in the very act of narration; it is an act which allows it to recognise itself as *the* Subject of its own history, and not an object of predetermined structure.

In postmodernist writing there appears a return to projects<sup>16</sup> of freedom, the essence of which refer us back to the past. However, the conditions of the past are no longer those which prevail in reality, and the struggle against the old definition of freedom means also the struggle against the past, elements of which continue to effect the present. Postmodernism may be viewed as this equivocal and multi-faceted approach seeking to combine the present and the past, and which continues to put both in question in terms of the 'truth' of their existence, while proclaiming that this truth is never *the* truth, but *a* truth, and it is a truth of this *present* that is my own. It is an attempt to be both participant and spectator in the spectacle of everyday life of the present. Foucault's preoccupation with the *present*, the here-and-now, equally shared by most notable postmodernists such as Lyotard and Derrida,<sup>17</sup> defines the essence of the postmodernist quest: for us to know the future we have to build on *a* certainty of the *now* in an age where all the past certitudes upon which the edifice of modern society has been established have fallen by the wayside. This is exemplified in the development of the deconstructionist approach of Derrida, the establishment of histories by Foucault, Lyotard's scepticism, and Baudrillard's simulations, all of which appear to be putting in question the bases according to which modern society defines and exercises its socio-economic and political power in the here-and-now.

Central to these diverse approaches in the study, the deconstruction and reconstruction of the present, is the question of modern subjectivity. To begin with postmodernists such as the early Foucault,<sup>18</sup> Baudrillard and Derrida deny the existence of such a notion as *subjectivity*, for this notion projects the humanist project

of liberty. However, replacing the centred notion of subjectivity is nevertheless a notion of *creativity* in which each individual *selfhood* is expressed; this creativity is expressed through the art of narration, or language. Postmodernism does not believe that subjectivity is viable, because subjectivity in humanist terms implied a notion of physical and mental creation. In their critique of Hegel and Marx, postmodernists return repeatedly to the idea that both Hegelianism and Marxism are no longer applicable to modern society because of the change in the economy, a change which deprives individuals of self-reproduction in material terms, thereby losing the capacity to materialise, or actualise their sense of creation.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, one cannot speak of postmodernism's 'subject' in terms of what this particular individual 'produces', but in terms of this individual's ability to 'create', that is, in and through language. However, postmodernism continues to be attached to the idea of mental creation, in so far as it suggests a type of freedom that is ultimate, for mental creativity is essentially non-physical, and does not demand that individuals be subject to the laws of objective nature. Furthermore, politically, postmodernism seeks to separate the individual from the ancient definition of social centrality, to uncover the power/knowledge control that society exercises over individuals, and to discredit the belief in the priority that the community had over the individual in classical political theory.

As to the nature of this 'selfhood,' postmodernism suggests that it consists of a choice of what appeals to the individual who is the maker and author of his or her personal history; in Foucault's terms, through the *creation* of the self by itself, hence through narration. Only when one narrates one's own history can one be certain of the content and reliability of this self. As Richard Rorty points out, the modern liberal self continually redefines its own content through a revision of its vocabulary;<sup>20</sup> a redefinition of terms is needed for every new context within which the liberal individual finds himself or herself. This implies that the individual will, as the actualisation of reflective judgment, is continually and consistently exercising its power and therewith establishes a presence that is undeniable. From this, several interrelated questions arise: is this will free? What does this freedom imply? How does it manifest itself in everyday activity? ...etc., answers to which may vary according to the intensity with which each postmodern author seeks to allow the individual the possibility of transcending modernity's socially determined structure.

For a definition of postmodernism to be more than a superficial survey of current opinion it cannot simply rely on the definitions given by its authors -some of



whom do not accept the classification of their work in terms of what is commonly called postmodernism<sup>21</sup>- but will have to impose limitations, socio-political and historically identifiable boundaries, within which it would be able to establish a line of thought the content of which may eventually be considered, if at all, as proper definition of this movement. It will therefore be argued here that postmodernist socio-political and historical theory is essentially a French-based movement,<sup>22</sup> reflecting to a great extent French experience of modernity in terms of both philosophy and political ideology; and in spite of its claim to be the articulation of the plight of Western society in general, its methods and ideological bases are invariably entrenched in French literary culture and philosophy. This is important for several reasons which will become clearer in this Part where it is argued, contrary to currently held opinion, that since it is a rejection of French based structuralism (that of Lévi-Strauss in particular) which was in turn critical of Sartre's existentialism and especially of existential Marxism, postmodernist theory adopts certain points in common with existentialism via its critique of structuralism: i.e., through the application of its particular brand of dialectics: in negating the negation of existentialism, postmodernism returns to an existentialist advocacy of *action in terms of language*.

However, postmodernism does not follow Sartre on all counts, but accepts Lévi-Strauss' objection to Sartre's universalising definition of human subjectivity. Lévi-Strauss cannot fully accept the view that "man has meaning only on the condition that he view himself as meaningful."<sup>23</sup> For he concedes that "*this meaning is never the right one*: superstructures are *faulty acts* which have 'made it' socially," and concludes that because of this "it is vain to go to historical consciousness for the truest meaning."<sup>24</sup> His objection is based on the view that such a system cannot belong both to history and to universality because it is itself 'ahistorical'. "It offers not a concrete image of history but an abstract schema of men making history of such a kind that it can manifest itself in the trend of their lives as a synchronic totality. Its position in relation to history is therefore the same as that of primitives to the eternal past: in Sartre's system, history plays exactly the part of a myth."<sup>25</sup> Lévi-Strauss also objected to existential Marxism's attempt to render social a concept that is itself internalised and purely individualistic. He charges Sartre with making humanity a prisoner of its own *cogito* and states that "by sociologizing the Cogito, Sartre merely exchanges one prison for another."<sup>26</sup> For "each subject's group and period now take the place of *timeless consciousness*."<sup>27</sup> These are indeed the errors that postmodernism would continue to charge Sartre with, all of which are concerned with

the claim to 'universal' value implied in Sartre's theory of subjective will. With this objection to 'universal' will aside, the argument outlined in Chapter II is concerned to point out the close affinity postmodernism has with Sartre's definition of subjectivity and its relation to language. It is important to emphasise at this point that the object of this study is not to claim that postmodernism is a contemporary version of existentialism. Rather, the point is that postmodernism is a movement that has been shaped by the diverse philosophical and literary currents present in France since the 1930s.<sup>28</sup> Postmodernism is far more a 'current' critique of the present than a reiteration of the past. I argue that postmodernism's cause appears in line with Sartre's existentialism in terms of how it defines subjectivity and human ontology.

It is equally important to note that postmodernism originates in the readings its authors make of Hegel (and of Marx and Marxism), and upon which they base their rejection of modernity and ascertain its failure. Along with Sartre, French postmodernists base their reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* - and Marx's views on the connection between production and subjectivity<sup>29</sup> - on the interpretations of Hegel by the French authorities on the subject, namely Alexandre Kojève and Jean Hyppolite.<sup>30</sup> The result of this dependence on secondary sources proves to be limiting, and indeed, even on postmodern standards of 'truth' claims, cannot be regarded as *the* 'truth' about the nature and adequacy of modernity, but only a particular interpretation of it. Furthermore, this Part examines the postmodern critique of modernity, the tradition of which starts with Hegel and ends with the Frankfurt School passing via Nietzsche and Weber,<sup>31</sup> and as such is preoccupied with the following concepts: reason, history, freedom, subjectivity and teleology.

The object of this Part is an ambitious one, and has the potential to be highly controversial. For it seeks to establish a study and critique of postmodernism that is based on two points. First, postmodernism is culturally limited, a position that postmodernists themselves cannot feign to deny, for they uphold in their own theories the specificity, rather than the universality, of any study and viewpoint; however, postmodernists seem to set claim to the whole of the modern world in their critique of the Western philosophical tradition, and by doing so they ultimately establish foundations for a given 'universality'. Second, it will be argued that in its emphasis on language and narration as means toward the actualisation of free self definition, postmodernism demonstrates very strong links with French existentialist definitions of human ontology and freedom, despite its strong denials and dismissal of Sartre and of humanism. The present argument seeks to demonstrate that the

affinity detected between the postmodern movement and existentialism is also present in the manner in which postmodernists read into Hegel and Marx a claim that has come out of the dissolution of the Humanist project for liberty, i.e. the actualisation of subjectivity in terms of creation, or 'production', one which is clearly present in Sartre's interpretation of the dialectics of both philosophers. Analysis will show that French postmodern thought has inherited a false definition of what 'constitutes' the elements of dialectics defining human ontology, and therewith it developed towards a negative, rather than a positive understanding of its capacities as a critical theory of the present, as well as those of contemporary society. Finally, it is argued that postmodern analysis of the present is essential to society's healthy development, but needs to separate itself from its more 'Romantic' aspects, i.e. that it should seek to establish freedom as actualised subjectivity in the world according to a Hegelian definition of 'becoming', rather than a Romantic conception of 'creation'/'invention'.

This Part consists of two chapters. Chapter I outlines Jean-Paul Sartre's definition of subjectivity as freedom in and through the imagination, the actuality of which is grounded in language. This definition is achieved through a study of Sartre's ontology of the subject, the *in-itself* and *for-itself*, as well as the relation his work establishes between being and consciousness/knowing. Once contrasted with Hegel's definition of the relationship between being and knowing, a distinct, and more coherent definition of Sartre's project for freedom is then established. This appears in terms of Sartre's intention to break away from the logocentric, divinity oriented Enlightenment tradition with which he identified Hegel, and his wish to return to a Kantian understanding of the individual's responsibility for personal actions.<sup>32</sup> Sartre's criticism of Hegelian/Marxist<sup>33</sup> dialectics and of the Hegelian moment of 'becoming,' establish his intention to break away from the traditionally held view that freedom as subjectivity is based upon a process of mediation, i.e. through an *other* that is object to the self/consciousness who is necessarily subject.

Chapter II presents three distinct postmodern critiques of modernity's failure to establish a society within which individuals can become free subjects. This includes Foucault's paradoxical position concerning subjectivity, Lyotard's definition of the postmodern 'condition', and Derrida's deconstructionist approach. For these authors, regardless of the method they use to establish their claim against modernity, it will be shown that in spite of their rejection, and conscious denial of humanism and existentialism, they nevertheless establish a definition of freedom in terms of language as action that is akin to Sartre's. If these analyses are correct,

postmodernism appears as a movement that has been fueled by a disillusionment with 'metanarratives', the interpreters of which remain imprisoned within the confines of the Romantic notion, stating that subjectivity is strictly an act of creative power; furthermore, that individuals have no other means to know that they are being denied their subjectivity than through the writing/creation, of the intellectual, the artist, the writer, the social critic. This would lead to the conclusion that postmodernism, like its Humanist and Romantic predecessors, remains a movement glorifying creative work, and, as such, proves to be self-serving and socially nihilistic.



## Chapter I: Existentialism: The Postmodern *Other*?

This Chapter has a twofold objective. First, it outlines the existentialist ontology based on the work of Jean-Paul Sartre. It will become clear from the outline that Sartre sought to break away from the traditional identification of knowing and being in order to establish a theory that separates consciousness entirely from *being* through a specific definition of *freedom as imagination*. As such, freedom in terms of self-actualisation is restricted to language, and more specifically to creative writing. Words for Sartre are *action*, they are the means by which we affirm our freedom in the world. However, with this lies the second objective. This break with traditional identification of knowing and being, which forms the basis of Hegelian and Marxist dialectics, deprives the process of self-actualisation from the moment of synthesis by introducing a triad, the ultimate purpose of which is nihilation.

Sartre's theory of subjectivity and freedom is presented here in three sections. The first provides a definition of subjectivity according to Sartre, taking not only Sartre's philosophical works, but also his novels as a practical interpretation of the meaning of this subjectivity in lived world experience. It contrasts Sartre's definition of being and nothingness, or the in-itself and for-itself, to Hegel's, and demonstrates that, as a product of their differences, Sartre's definition of what actualises freedom constitutes a double-negation of reality. Section Two develops the links between Sartre's ontology and subjectivity as freedom expressed through language. Section Three presents Sartre's attempt to ground his theory of freedom in a socio-political context. It therefore presents his development of the Existentialist Marxist ideology, the aim of which was to divest Marxism of its materialist, fetishist interpretation of human ontology. Analysis will show that Sartre's reading and adaptation of Marxism does not alter his original theory as some commentators on Sartre would wish to claim;<sup>34</sup> rather, his definition of subjectivity as freedom expressed in and through language appears to have been maintained not only in his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, but also in his later works, such as those on Flaubert and Jean Genet.

### *Existential Subjectivity*

In *Existentialism and Humanism*,<sup>35</sup> Sartre explains that "if God does not exist there is at least one being whose existence comes before its essence, a being which exists before it can be defined by any conception of it. That being is man or,

as Heidegger has it, the human reality."<sup>36</sup> An existentialist would find it difficult to define the essence of the self, for "to begin with he is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself."<sup>37</sup> For Sartre one simply *is*; the content of this self depends entirely on both the will and the praxis<sup>38</sup> but only after "that *leap* towards existence"<sup>39</sup> has been taken, and has invariably become part and parcel of the shaping of this existence. Existentialists "believe that *existence* comes before *essence* -or, if you will, that we must begin from the subjective;"<sup>40</sup> this subjectivism implies that each individual "cannot pass beyond human subjectivity,"<sup>41</sup> i.e. that the recognition and constitution of one's subjectivity represents the highest point in the achievement of freedom as consciousness in the world, for there is no divine beyond, no transcendent *Other* whose *Being* can come to define the *essence* of humanity.

In his definition of what constitutes subjectivity, Sartre makes a distinction between consciousness of the self and the creation of the self.<sup>42</sup> Consciousness is itself an unuttered, unactualised moment of thought, which finds no expression, either in language or in reflection, but seeks its self knowledge outside of the realm of thought.<sup>43</sup> By contrast, the concrete actualisation of the self lies in the praxis, the action, of the individual made according to the decision to commit oneself to an action, only the result of this action constitutes the self in reality. This distinction is noteworthy on many levels. It appears in this radical form in the early philosophical essays, and more explicitly, in *Being and Nothingness* (1943) wherein the in-itself and the for-itself, the phenomenal world and the self-as-consciousness, inhabit two exclusive spheres, and are separated by a *néant*, nothingness, itself a product of reflexive consciousness. Similarly, in *Nausée* (1938) Roquentin's reflections on the world are dissociated from his own activity, and the entire novel represents a questioning by the self of what constitutes it, and what will give its own entity a meaning. Roquentin could not be satisfied with the label of Historian, for the possibilities which constituted his consciousness were limited and inhibited by this label. In fact, every single naming of a phenomenal existence, a 'sea gull', 'a root', 'a seat', meant to define the essence of things; however, as Roquentin discovers, these words do not express our consciousness of them, for consciousness is what 'is not', rather than what 'is', and as such, being and knowing appear as distinct moments of existence.

It is important to provide a few words of explanation concerning the nature of Sartre's ontology in a brief definition of what constitutes being-for-itself, being-in-

itself, and the Other, for this is necessary to establish a distinction between Sartre's brand of 'dialectics' and Hegel's. For Sartre, being-for-itself is consciousness which is itself a 'négativité' - a word which expresses all sorts of negations: interrogation, destruction, and negative judgement, all of which constitute the *for-itself* as the origin of negation. Indeed, the for-itself appears essentially as consciousness of non-being. In one's capacity to interrogate, destroy (eliminate possibilities) and establish a judgement based on negation of what is - i.e. by recognising what *is*, one acknowledges also what is not- one becomes conscious of one's self *being* conscious (i.e. the process/activity of consciousness), a process which defines the essence of the for-itself, or non-being. The for-itself is therefore outside of being, and as such free. For Sartre, the for-itself is freedom.<sup>44</sup> This freedom comes at the price of its being entirely, and permanently, separate from the in-itself, which occurs because consciousness reaches and acknowledges being merely as something external. In doing so, the *for-itself* is never a thing, an object, but a *force*, that is linked to action rather than to observation. All phenomena belong, as a mass, to the realm of the being-in-itself that is itself not reflexive, but is objectified through reflection. Subjectivity as consciousness is, therefore, a nothingness. It is emptiness of being-in-itself. The point at which Sartre's ontology does not follow Hegel toward a definition of being in-the-world occurs when Sartre affirms the traditional distinction between the *emptiness* of the for-itself and the fullness of the in-itself, i.e. in stating that "consciousness is a being such that in its being, its being is in question in so far as this being implies a being other than itself."<sup>45</sup> Here, Sartre means to emphasise that the for-itself never "exists *for-itself* but only *for the object*, and that subjectivity is a consciousness *without Subject*."<sup>46</sup> In other words, the for-itself is *immaterial* and can never be an object, not even that of its own. As it will be shown later, the for-itself is invariably *action*, energy, activity, but can never manifest itself as a thingness or a whatness.

For Hegel, the for-itself is a product of mediation between two elements which stand in opposition to each other, i.e. thought and nothingness. Being-in-itself is a phenomenal existence of the thinking 'I' made real through the process of mediation between the 'I' as conscious thought and the 'not I', or nothingness. As such, it transpires that Hegel would have agreed with the first part of Sartre's definition of the for-itself as the product of a negation; however, he would not agree that thought exists separately from being, or the in-itself, although he would agree that being-for-itself believes itself to exist separately from being in its first moments, e.g. the *pure* being-for-itself characteristic of self-consciousness at the start of the

'Self-Consciousness' section of the *Phenomenology* which attempts to establish and consolidate its certainty in absolute opposition to all positive being. Be that as it may, for Hegel, thought does not transcend being, but is the product, i.e. consciousness, of the recognition of the distinction between being and nothingness. Consciousness, therefore, is transcended by the earlier mediation between something and nothing. For Hegel, like the point in the middle of the circle, I know that I exist because I can perceive the nothingness which surrounds me. Were the in-itself (the circle) to be totally full, as Sartre suggests, then a tautology would ensue, for there can be no distinction between *I* and *not I*, and therefore no mediation. It would simply remain as the arbitrary utterance 'I am I', the result of which yields no self-consciousness *in the world*. Further explanation of Sartre's theory is needed to clarify this point.

For Sartre, the in-itself is defined as what *is*, the knowledge of which is intuitive.<sup>47</sup> But Sartre reverses the Husserlian definition of intuition by stating that it is not the presence of the thing to consciousness, but "*the presence of consciousness to the thing*."<sup>48</sup> This distinction emphasises the separation of consciousness from thingness. For Sartre, consciousness is the permanent game of reflexivity-reflecting. Therefore, consciousness, in merely reflecting a reflex, remains an activity which falls away at the moment that the in-itself vanishes and ceases to exist as thingness. As such, the knowledge of the in-itself remains a product of negation, or nihilation, in and through the activity of the for-itself, which would indicate that knowledge "is neither a relation, a quality, nor an activity; it is the essence of the For-itself insofar as it is 'present to...'. "<sup>49</sup> Sartre identifies knowledge in the not-I. For the knowledge of "this" thing "is possible by emphasizing some specific negation, leaving, at the same time, the rest of the world in a foggy background."<sup>50</sup> The in-itself does not hold a certain 'external relation', for the relationship of a 'this' to a 'that' must occur within the for-itself; otherwise, the order of things in the in-itself remains rather 'neutral'. For Sartre, "an external relation is neither objective nor subjective, but 'hangs, ... in the air.' It is *nothing*; its whole being consists in 'being quoted' by the For-itself."<sup>51</sup>

In acknowledging the properties of the in-itself, its internal structure, Sartre indicates that objects cannot be distinguished from their quality, that is, that a table cannot be distinguished from its external properties which make it what it appears to be. As such, if a table is round and red, and has three legs, then it is the interpenetration of these properties which make it 'this table'. These properties also enter into my qualification (negative judgment) of 'this table' in terms of its



*potentiality* as permanence, i.e. as desired object of admiration, potential for its use as stool, etc. What's more, it is this potentiality that defines the for-itself's drive to 'utilise' a 'this'. Given the for-itself's constant preoccupation with a lack, an emptiness, in its qualifying of a 'thingness' it also identifies the possibility of *action* for the realisation of a *task*, through which it gains recognition as subjectivity in the present.<sup>52</sup> In this sense, things do not exist, nor do they have properties in themselves, but are there for the for-itself; in taking this position, Sartre seeks to dissolve any claim to metaphysical content attached to the world as a whole: things have no properties, no essence of their own, but are acknowledged/perceived through human consciousness which is responsible for their appearance.

Following from this radical separation between things and thought, Sartre can only define the Other of the self as *another* person who is endowed with a subjective consciousness. Invariably, the Other is never, as it is often considered, an object of perception, but a *Subject*. In my encounter with the Other, my subjective world seems to "disintegrate," when faced with the Other's subjective world. "And this falling to pieces of my monopolized world is precisely the apparition of the Other in the universe."<sup>53</sup> This falling apart of my universe occurs because in and through the Other's gaze I am an object in the Other's world, as much as the Other is an object in mine; to be looked at is to be *annihilated* in the gaze of the Other, thereby feeling myself transformed from a Subject to myself as an *object*. By being looked at I am transcended, my possibilities are transcended by those of the Other, and this because I am no longer the sole actor in the situation, nor the sole perceiver; my actions (intentions) are already perceived and observed by the Other, a situation which renders my *possibilities* (what I can and shall do) into *probabilities* (what I may and will do). The Other *locates* me in space, and posits me *in time*. This occurs because with the Other's presence I am forced to acknowledge the feeling and possibility of *simultaneous* existence which occurs in the present moment within a given space. This feeling of simultaneity makes me also feel subject to the Other's actions, and therewith "I am his slave."<sup>54</sup> However, the Other's gaze does not endow me with ordinary knowledge, but is literally a "hole in my universe," and hence a new dimension which gives rise to specific reactions (shame, pride, alienation...etc.) proving the Other's existence.

In this encounter with the Other, Sartre's ontology endows the for-itself with a double stance. On the one hand, I can know myself as I am to myself, i.e. as being-for-myself, or I can know myself (as did Jean Genet) in and through the Other,

and therefore as my being-for-the-Other, hence as object. As such there seems to be a stage when the being-for-itself appears as a 'neutral' zone between being-for-myself and being-for-the-other, in which subjectivity is uncertain. For in being-for-myself, I am not quite certain that I am a Subject, for I have not grounded this subjectivity in a social context, whereas being-for-the-Other "is a fall through absolute emptiness towards being an Object."<sup>55</sup> However, I need not accept this feeling of 'objectification', and am able to annihilate the feelings which reduce me to object (such as fear, shame, alienation,...) and recapture my being-for-itself, and therewith my subjectivity.<sup>56</sup> This socio-political affirmation constitutes the moment of my being for-itself not only in my personal consciousness, but also in that of the Other. The Other is not negligible for Sartre, for its presence decides for me the manner in which I may eventually perceive myself as self. However, as it will be shown in the following section, the Other's presence is not always threatening, e.g. if this presence is made through the written word, it may even be liberating and inspiring. When presence is physical it becomes threatening, and when word and gaze combine to point out a personal attribute of my for-itself (such as the case with Genet when he was called 'thief'), it is then that I become an *object* of shame, pride ...etc. I am thereby alienated from my consciousness and become for-the-Other. This distinction is of primary importance, because, for Sartre, freedom is also actualised *in* and *through* language. It is the language of the Other, that can *inspire* me, for it has no direct import on the 'I think' of my consciousness or my for-itself.

The presence of the Other is paradoxical to me. It limits me insofar as it appears as "concrete 'subjectivity,' the bottom of which never can be reached,"<sup>57</sup> but then again, Sartre refers to the Other as the *centre*, whose life continually posits the world around his or her needs. The Other is always present, for there will always be others, but in its being perceived by my for-itself, he or she appears as an absence, a curious state that Sartre coined the "absent-presence": "I want him to stay object and I hate to see him subject again! He makes it nevertheless from time to time. The dead alone stay object for ever."<sup>58</sup> This reference to the dead as permanent objects in *No Exit* points to the fact that in hell (the future abode of all ill-doers), the feeling of shame, fear and alienation is all encompassing. It is too late for the for-itself to recapture its subjectivity through action, for time has run-out, and the possibility of acting according to nobler thoughts has come to naught. In hell, I bear the full responsibility of having forsaken my for-itself, and am now subject to being always considered as object of shame. However, in all of this, the for-itself remains invariably separate from the in-itself and from for-the-other, and this even when the

Other stands in opposition to my for-itself making it possible for me to be reduced to the status of object. In other words, for Sartre there is no possible unity which can bring all three into a whole that is operable. In the Sartrean world, I stand in a constant struggle to be subject over and above the world of things and the Other[s].<sup>59</sup> I am not, nor can ever be, a part of a harmonious universe in which synthesis between opposites can occur. This position stands in direct opposition to that of Hegel<sup>60</sup> whose primary purpose was to expose the reason for which this diversity came about, and presents a method able to undo this explosion of distinct 'consciousnesses' in order to achieve a unity.

Sartre's position regarding Hegel's ontology is crucial to this study. For although he begins his own ontology according to the Hegelian definition of the beginning being based in the negation of opposites, Sartre does not follow him in aiming to achieve a synthesis between the two, therefore to complete the dialectic. This I shall argue is based upon two elements which separate the two philosophers, and which are vital to the understanding of Hegelian dialectics, if not dialectics in general. First, for Hegel, the quality of a thing, as it is in its positive aspect a sub-category of being-in-itself, "is the inherent character or being of the thing as it is in itself apart from all other things."<sup>61</sup> Whereas, the quality of a thing regarded in its negative aspect (negation) is the character of the thing as negating some other thing, which "is then a being which stands in relation to [negates] other things. As such it is the sub-category of being-for-other."<sup>62</sup> In other words, the in-itself and for-itself are not totally separate but are mediated; what's more, for Hegel the in-itself includes the moment of being-for-other, i.e. the in-itself is not necessarily pure thingness, nor is the other a pure consciousness. For Hegel, as it is for Heidegger, we are not and can never be conceived of as pure consciousness wholly and completely separate from our bodies. On the contrary, Hegel adheres to the position that opposites, being and nothingness, are in fact identical. To understand this it will be important to say a few words on Hegel's position on knowing and being.

Second, consciousness does not suffice for the actualisation of subjectivity. Hegel believes that I do not acquire freedom simply through thought, but freedom has to become real through action, and more precisely has to be recognised by Others as well. Freedom, for Hegel, can only be actual when it is social. To this Sartre would agree, but answers that consciousness need not be actualised through an identification with being, but that it can be freedom through words, i.e. through the creation of one's own world on paper, the publication of which makes this freedom both actual



and social. These points demand further explanation.

Sartre's position concerning the absolute separation between being and knowing points to a difficulty in philosophy since Plato, and finds in Hegel's philosophy concerning the transition from Logic to Nature an uneasy solution. Hegel makes the distinction between the categories (elements of thought) which he defines as having an *independent* objective being, and sensuous universals, which have a *dependent* objective being. However, Hegel does not hold that they are distinctly opposed. Given that the categories "are the logical conditions of all experience, of all consciousness," they are that part of consciousness which consists in sensuous universals. Hegel adheres to the "belief in the objectivity of universals" which "consists in what is sometimes called the identity of knowing and being."<sup>63</sup> This indicates, contrary to Sartre's position, that the subject (the knowing consciousness), and the object (being), are identical. Consciousness is therefore neither external to, nor absolutely different from, being. Their identity is based upon their being "two different aspects of one reality."<sup>64</sup> The establishing of the identity between subject and object is necessary to overcome the self-contradictory Kantian theory of the existence of the unknowable thing-in-itself. On this both Sartre and Hegel would agree. However, Sartre objects strongly to Hegel's conclusions, i.e. that subject and object are identical because "the object itself is precisely what thought makes of it."<sup>65</sup> For Sartre, consciousness can never be identical to being because it is distinctly negative; it annihilates being and therefore cannot identify itself with it as thingness, but identifies itself with it as an annihilated thingness, i.e. nothingness.<sup>66</sup>

But, for Hegel, "Being *means* being *for* consciousness,"<sup>67</sup> and there is no other type of being. It is in the nature of being to stand in relation to a subject *for* which it is an object. However, subject and object are not simply identical, but also distinct. They cannot be simply identical, otherwise there would be no absolute separation between them, for the object would then be within the subject. Similarly, they cannot be simply distinct because this would mean that the object is outside of thought, and hence unknowable. This leaves Hegel with the conclusion that "thought overreaches the gulf between itself and its object, - or that the separation between thought and thing is a separation *within* thought itself."<sup>68</sup> What differentiates Sartre's position from Hegel's is the concept of mediation between thing and thought. In the case of being-in-itself and being-for-self, there is of course the process of being-for-other which acts as medium. As defined above, being-for-other for Hegel is a sub-category of being-in-itself, it is its negative aspect. When I identify a stone, the stone



is not-I, but it is also my conception of it which makes me identify it as such. Therefore, the not-I of the stone is the stone being-for-other. For Hegel, being-for-other is not Sartre's being-for-the-Other, for the other in Hegel is not necessarily -although it can be<sup>69</sup>- an other person, but may be anything that is not-I. It is not another consciousness through which I disintegrate as consciousness, but is a moment of distinction and overcoming, a moment of *Aufhebung*.

It is now clear that for Sartre, Hegel's being-for-other is in fact consciousness, the not-I, but is also the being-for-itself. Not so for Hegel, for whom the moment of being-for-self is in fact 'becoming', or absolutely determinate being. Hegel would suggest that Sartre's definition of for-itself is erroneous because as the moment of nihilation, it suggests that no particular idea of being is determined because the moment of actually determining this being as a 'this' is left unresolved; it remains the not-I of perception. Hegel's answer to this dilemma comes in the resolution of the contradiction of the I and not-I through the process of *becoming* which is the unity of the two. With this Hegel forms the triad of his dialectical method, where being is the thesis, nothingness (consciousness) is the antithesis, and becoming the synthesis. The latter is then posited as the thesis of yet another triad which includes all the contradictions and resolutions of former triads, bringing the original 'being' toward higher degrees of determination, i.e. toward the Absolute which is itself infinite. This implies that the infinite, or determinate being, was already present at the very start, indicating that within being there already existed its opposite, non-being or infinity. It also indicates that the present, this moment of determinate existence is indeed *becoming*, or what is *actual*. The difference between Hegel's *actual* differs from Sartre's *real* in so far as it is both being and becoming all at once.<sup>70</sup> Whereas the *real* for Sartre is purely determinate being, and hence can only signify *being*.

In Hegelian terms, Sartre, although rejecting the Kantian theory of the thing-in-itself, commits a similar error that Hegel calls 'understanding' which opposes itself to 'reason'. The understanding "believes that two opposites, such as being and nothing, absolutely exclude each other," whereas "reason admits that ... this exclusion is not absolute and is not incompatible with the identity of the two opposites."<sup>71</sup> Hegel's positing of reason in this manner is in fact not a novelty, but has been explicitly stated by earlier writers. Heraclitus, the Vedantists, Plotinus, and Spinoza all believed in the unity of opposites, and therewith identified the truth as one, and the many proceed from the one, or *is* the one. Hegel's deductions are based

upon this familiar theory which implies the necessary union between the one and the many. On the other hand, Sartre's vision of the world consists not in unity but in plurality of consciousnesses. When facing the Other[s], the for-itself produces a double negation, thereby making it plural. Sartre seems unable to explain this phenomenon and claims that "the answer involves an insoluble antinomy," which is unexplainable, "it is so."<sup>72</sup>

Sartre cannot accept Hegel's identity of opposites because it would mean that the individual is unable, and therefore unfree, to think independently from the sensuous universal, and that imagination is identical to perception. In *The Psychology of the Imagination*, a treatise on phenomenological psychology published in 1940, Sartre rejects the idea that imagination is a vague or faded perception. Although the objects of both are the same, what distinguishes the two is the conscious attitude toward the object. In imagination, the object is posited as either absent, non-existent, existing elsewhere, or neutralised (i.e. not posited as existing). For now it is clear why consciousness, at least in imagination, cannot depend on the nature of being. In order to posit an object as non-existent, the very act of imagination must perform a double nihilation. Imagination, like the Hegelian triad,<sup>73</sup> performs a three point movement. However, unlike this dialectic, it does not achieve synthesis, but a double nihilation. According to Sartre, the imaginative act is "constituting, isolating, and nihilating."<sup>74</sup> "It constitutes the world as a *world*, for before consciousness there was no 'world' but only full, undifferentiated being. It then nihilates the world from a particular point of view and by a second act of nihilation isolates the object from the world -as out-of-reach."<sup>75</sup> By positing thus the final moment of the overcoming of negation with another negation, Sartre does not reach an actualised moment, a determined state of being-in-the-world, but a determined state of being in consciousness which is imagination, i.e. life in thought.

This accounts for the for-itself's attachment to its non-sensuous being. However, how can this be a theory of *being* at all? The answer to this lies in Sartre's original pre-occupation, namely, the question of freedom. How is one to be free in the world when the world itself is a prison from which one would not be able to extricate one's self if following Hegelian ontology? In this early book, Sartre had already established the direct links between nothingness and freedom: "in order to imagine, consciousness must be free from all specific reality and this freedom must be able to define itself by a 'being-in-the-world which is at once the constitution and the negation of the world'."<sup>76</sup> In other words, consciousness, the for-itself, must be

able to establish a consciousness of the "unreal."<sup>77</sup> This occurs because the unreal "is produced outside of the world by a consciousness which *stays* in the world, and it is because he is *transcendentally free* that man can imagine."<sup>78</sup> It is essentially this freedom, which, in its own way, 'nihilates' the determined being of Hegel, also allows the individual to establish his/her own self independently of the social world. This is a world that Hegel identifies as the *universal* with which the individual must eventually identify. For Sartre one has a choice, and a responsibility for this choice.

For Sartre, to be free one has to choose. This is because it is in choosing that one may be able to give shape to one's self. In *Existentialism and Humanism*, Sartre states that "when we say that man chooses himself, we do mean that every one of us must choose himself; but by that we also mean that in choosing for himself he chooses for all men."<sup>79</sup> As such, Sartre seems to hold that there is a common feature which permeates humanity, and that one's decision for one's action in the world must follow the Kantian imperative of knowing consciously that one is choosing what others would be allowed to do as well. He adds that "if ... we will to exist at the same time as we fashion our image, that image is valid for all and for the entire epoch in which we find ourselves. Our responsibility is thus much greater than we had supposed, for it concerns mankind as a whole."<sup>80</sup>

This responsibility fashions the existential *angst*. According to Sartre, anguish is "far from being a screen which could separate us from action, *it is a condition of action itself*."<sup>81</sup> This anguish exists because, unlike the individual formulating the Kantian categorical imperative, the existentialist has not the advantage of being able to rely on a God from whom he/she has acquired a definition of human essence. Rather, "the existentialist ... finds it extremely embarrassing that God does not exist, for there disappears all possibility of finding values in an intelligible heaven. There can no longer be any good *à priori* since there is no infinite and perfect consciousness to think it. ...we are now upon the plane where there are only men."<sup>82</sup> However, it is also within this action that reality is constituted, and lies the *essence* of selfhood which manifests itself and does not rely on a pre-thought consciousness. This explains Sartre's demand that consciousness and actuality be distinct, for one may be conscious of many things, but it is only in action that one is able to ground this potential into reality. Only in *leaping* into existence (and is not thrown in it as Heidegger suggests) does the potential shape reality and bring forth human essence.

Yet where is, or what constitutes freedom? For Sartre pure subjectivity, and



hence freedom, is an absolute truth incarnate in Descartes' "I think therefore I am." Unlike Descartes and Kant, however, Sartre wishes to underline the fact that this type of knowledge is not one which depends on an innate understanding of human nature given *à priori*,<sup>83</sup> but it is a reflective knowledge, which understands human essence through the inter-subjective interaction of this consciousness with the world, i.e. with other individuals. Here the *cogito* is a universal, for "when we say "I think" we are attaining to ourselves in the presence of the other, and we are just as certain of the other as we are of ourselves. Thus the man who discovers himself directly in the *cogito* also discovers all the others, and discovers them as the condition of his own existence. He recognises that he cannot be anything (...) unless others recognise him as such."<sup>84</sup> Moreover, for Sartre, "we will freedom for freedom's sake, and ... in thus willing freedom, we discover that it depends entirely on the freedom of others and that the freedom of others depends upon our own."<sup>85</sup> If the choice of an action is an expression of freedom, how authentic, may be asked, is the relation, if any, between the conscious *I think* and the active *I do*? In other words, although Sartre's rejection of Hegel's dialectics places emphasis on the primacy of thought as source of freedom, how is this freedom in fact actualised?

If freedom to exist is to be authentic, it should follow that the definition I give to my essence materialises accordingly. These are questions to which the corpus of Sartre's post-war writing sought to formulate an answer, bringing him closer to Marxism. For in the definition he gives of freedom in *Existentialism and Humanism*, as well as in *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre's individual, like Roquentin, seems to be stumbling endlessly in a world that is inhabited by other individuals whose only means to self-knowledge is each other. The world is itself mute, and in fact hardly inter-subjective, for Roquentin seems to need no external stimulus, no human relations, and the world around him is external to him and to a large degree alien. It is a world he did not shape, did not fashion, and is merely observing. The pebble, the tramway seat, the tree root are objects which give no meaning, and yet constitute entities (expressions of a given social context) against which he can exercise his own self-questioning. The book ends with Roquentin's reflection on a song whose writer and singer seemed to have left their own essence in it, and left it to be recognised by others as what told the story of their existence. For Roquentin, the book he wants to write takes on a similar meaning. It will justify and register a reason for his existence, it will help narrate, if only in the future, the meaning of the past that he has lived, and with this a shadow, a glimpse of his own essence. In this manner, Roquentin conceives of himself as a prisoner of a world in which he is able to reflect



his essence, but from which he remains separate. It is therefore possible to express one's uniqueness in the world, but that one has to remain separate from it. Roquentin's - Sartre's *free* individual's - world emerges as that sphere of existence filled with obstacles and illusions, alien and terrifying. There is no sphere in which social, political and economical relations or conditions are relevant. History is my history, the one that I have written, or have yet to create, all "in respect of concrete circumstances."<sup>86</sup>

When defining the road to the actualisation of freedom in *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre insists that consciousness only comes after the act, for consciousness itself is unreflected (*irréfléchi*) and can only acquire meaning and content once *reflected*, i.e. in terms of an act, an objectification of the will.<sup>87</sup> However, once reflected, the meaning and content of this consciousness appears invariably as belonging to a past moment, an earlier self who, since, has been altered by the very action this reflection has brought about. This clearly indicates the *néant*, the nothingness contained within the Cartesian cogito's *I think*; for Sartre, since consciousness cannot reflect prior to an act, then it must be concluded that it is empty. As Hugh Silverman points out, this definition of consciousness breaks with the Husserlian and Cartesian view by proposing that the self is an "active, individual nonself."<sup>88</sup>

This accords with Roquentin's discovery that *there are no adventures*. He bases this on the logic that adventures are stories, and "one does not live a story."<sup>89</sup> It is an established act which acquires the defining meaning of *adventure* in terms of its conclusion; hence one is forced to live one's experiences only through the relating of an event, rather than through the very act of living it. Roquentin faces the disillusionment of the present: if one can only tell of life after having lived it, then one is forced to do one or the other, i.e. that "one can either live or tell; not both at once."<sup>90</sup> In other words, in order to make sense of life one has to record it as it occurs, and then only later by reading it as a literary work, listening to it as a piece of music, or looking at it as a work of art, can one conceive of the meaning of this life in its totality. It is important that it be seen in its totality, for Sartre defines existential humanism to be "this relation of transcendence as constitutive of man (not in the sense that God is transcendent, but in the sense of *self-surpassing*) with subjectivity (in such a sense that man is not shut up in himself but forever present in a human universe)."<sup>91</sup> The *self-surpassing* suggests the process of overcoming, the Hegelian and Derridean *Aufheben*, which is present in synthesis thereby requiring the putting

together of the diverse elements which make up the totality of an individual life.

*Author, Existentialism and Language*

Also present in Roquentin's experience of the world, and of this self that he is seeking to define, is the absence of a certainty in language. While staring at a seat in a tramcar, Roquentin murmurs to himself: "it's a seat, as a sort of exorcism. But the word remains on my lips: it refuses to go and rest upon the thing ..." "Things are delivered from their names. They are there, grotesque, stubborn, huge, and it seems crazy to call them seats or to say anything whatever about them." These thoughts are continued in his visit to the public park, as are his reflections upon the absence of preceived relations between the words 'root' and 'seagull' and the images of these things in themselves; upon this he comes to the understanding that "I understood that there was no middle way between non-existence and this swooning abundance. What exists at all must exist to this point: to the point of mouldering, of bulging, of obscenity. In another world, circles and melodies retain their pure rigid contours. But existence is degeneration."<sup>92</sup> These Platonist preoccupations suggest, like Plato's mistrust of the phenomenal adulteration of the purity of the *idea*, that the choice, the intent upon an action, even if this be the simple naming of a thing, limits other possibilities that are potentially present in the nothingness of consciousness. Therewith appears the recognition of the limitations imposed upon one's choices, which are made by a world the present of which, in this context, seems unbearably limiting and alienating, and within which one is forced to live life from without, to fit in, rather than 'create'.

Yet there is a second side to this pre-occupation with language. Roquentin seizes upon these limitations through the use of words; the absence of the 'middle way' between non-existence and the abundance of things lies in the absence of the naming, the identifying of action, the process of becoming free which Sartre attempts to formulate later in *Being and Nothingness*. These are the words which will define *being*, as distinct from simply *existing*. Words will come as the writing of this history, my history, takes shape, and therewith the meaning of my being. For until I am able to define the process of this *becoming*<sup>93</sup> in the form of a story that I can relate and through which I can objectify my *being*, I merely *exist* as an empty consciousness. In this sense, I would fully agree with Silverman who argues that "since this self is not an ego and is without content, without a meaning to define it,

there is surely no name that characterizes a particular self, no word that will serve as the predicate noun or adjective indicating who the self is."<sup>94</sup> However, as the existing self has no name, no word describing its nature or its content, it, nevertheless, does acquire a meaning, a self, in the very act of objectifying itself, albeit for simply the mere *moment* of this action. Its meaning is momentary, the time it takes to act, or utter a sentence, and then this self is altered by this act thereby becoming other to itself (i.e. the self before the act occurred). As such, the words uttered to express the first moment of an acted consciousness cannot be taken as final, and will have to wait until this self ceases to act, collect the essence of all previous actions in their totality, compose one last narrative which may be used to define it. Hence, words, although not defining the immediate vacuous self, do arise, and are indeed necessary, as Roquentin suggests, for the recognition, the knowledge of this lived life.

In this distinction between *existing* and *being*, the existentialist angst appears as the absence of this certainty present in the naming of the nature of what I am. In *Nausea*, what frightens and *nauseates* Roquentin is the recognition that whilst he pronounces the words, 'root', 'seagull' and so on, he acquires no image of these things, and therewith recognises the futility of the words uttered, and consequently the futility of the words he uses to write his life. Roquentin's knowledge of his subjectivity seems elusive, for the action which determines being comes always from without and not from within; the angst is that of not knowing, not having the power to alter the situation in which we are, but continue to shoulder the responsibility of the actions we voluntarily make within pre-existent circumstances. The self is not the author of its conscious act, for the self is not the other in which it recognises itself, in which it is reflected onto itself, through which it becomes conscious and acquires a value. The self is therefore forever a reflection from without, which brings us to the first moment in which this self is formed and which Sartre defines in *What is Literature?* (1947) and *Dirty Hands* (1948).

Given the fact that in *Being and Nothingness* the self is experienced as an "absent-presence,"<sup>95</sup> and that in *Existentialism and Humanism*, the self is identical to all others, and whose choice it takes to be equally universal, Sartre suggests in *What is Literature?* that the freedom is intimately bound up with the activity of the writer whose work appears to the readers in terms of a universal definition of the meaning of being, thereby freeing them. Sartre views the relationship between the writer and the reader in terms of dialectical *aufheben*, i.e. that the "creative freedom" of the first



must be recognised and solicited by the second such that "the more we experience our freedom, the more we recognize that of the other; the more he [writer] demands of us, the more we [reader] demand of him."<sup>96</sup> Here, Sartre puts in clearer focus the intersubjective activity he proposed in *Existentialism and Humanism*. Writing and reading become the medium through which this exchange and universalisation of the essence of the self occurs. For Sartre, language "is a prolongation of the senses, a third eye which is going to look into our neighbor's heart. We are within language as within our body. We feel it spontaneously while going beyond it toward other ends, as we feel our hands and our feet; we perceive it when it is the other who is using it, as we perceive the limbs of others."<sup>97</sup> Words and writing are therefore the active objectification of human essence; they constitute an act which captures without altering the meaning of freedom. It is also an act which is never static. For in its dialectical relation with the reader, it demands that the source, i.e. the writer, follow the movement of the time, of the *epoch*.

Furthermore, Sartre states that "there is the word which is lived and the word which is met. But in both cases, it is the course of an undertaking, either of me acting on others or the other upon me. The word is a certain particular moment of action and has no meaning outside of it."<sup>98</sup> While words are action and constitute the active being in the world of the writer, they are not the only mode of action that has the merit of becoming universal, and therefore socially recognised. Creative action occurs in all mediums of life. However, only those who act, i.e. create, acquire a definition of the essence of their self. Others would have to act, not as readers or observers, but as doers. This occurs because consciousness is able to seize upon many possibilities for its own nature, however only in action can it determine what this nature might be.

The dialectical relationship between writer and public is clearly stated in Sartre's *Saint Genet, comédien et martyr* (1952) whose self-identity was pronounced when he was called "Thief!" by his adoptive parents. The word 'thief', with all the weight of its social implications, became the identity with which Genet sought to express his now defined essence. Genet's essence is thus socially pre-defined, condemning him to a life-long affirmation of this identity; as such Genet became a Being-for-the-Other. This occurs because Genet's consciousness became fixed on one form of otherness with which it consistently identified; it was no longer nothingness awaiting the moment of action for its definition, but expressed a reflection that has become its own. Genet is invariably other to his unreflective



consciousness, and as such is alienated from the possibilities which may have defined his essence in other terms than 'thief'. This self-alienation leaves Genet an absolute freedom to be evil, for what should have existentially bound him to others within society should have been his choice of what is *better for all*,<sup>99</sup> which in this case was entirely negated. In this Sartre points out the power of words as action in the world, and more so in terms of the dialectical relationship they maintain between the author and the receiver.

### *Language, Subjectivity and Existentialist Marxism*

Sartre's complete integration of existentialism as an 'ideology' of its time within a Marxist philosophy is introduced in *Search for a Method* (1957), the prefatory essay in *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960). In the former, Sartre seems not only to abandon his earlier critique of Hegel's dialectic, but goes beyond the outlining of the dialectical relationship between the self and language to include the Marxist definition of the formation of the social structures and its role in promoting our self-knowledge, i.e. freedom. Our knowledge of our 'self' occurs on two levels: we are not only the existentialist actors, the knowers, but, as with Genet, we are the known.<sup>100</sup> As known, we belong to a class of which we constitute both its consciousness and interests. For Sartre, class consciousness does not merely stop at the manifestations of external contradictions defining it, but "is that contradiction already surpassed by *praxis* and thereby preserved and denied all at once."<sup>101</sup> It is our identification with, and attempt to overcome as a unit, a *we*, the elements which constitute our class. Hence, the social self, what acts in line with others on the same level, operates by maintaining a common *language* and *praxis*, which defines its entity within the context of class struggle.

In *Search for a Method*, Sartre's definition of subjectivity is twofold. First, he points out his complete acceptance of the Marxist thesis that "men themselves make their history but in a given environment which conditions them."<sup>102</sup> Sartre rejects, however, the Marxists' interpretation of this in terms which portray the individual as an "inert object, with the nature which it has received, contributes to precipitate or to check the 'course of the world'," because it implies that "there would be no difference between the human agent and the machine."<sup>103</sup> Rather, Sartre proceeds to define the social subject in terms which avoid such simplistic interpretation. He takes this statement to mean "that man in a period of exploitation is

at once both the product of his own product and a historical agent who can under no circumstances be taken as a product."<sup>104</sup> Second, Sartre expresses this same dialectical ontology of object-subject in terms of semiology and Hegelian dialectics; on this he states that "for Hegel, the Signifying (at any moment of history) is the movement of Mind (which will be constituted as the signifying-signified and the signified-signifying; that is, as absolute-subject);"<sup>105</sup> he contrasts this position to Kierkegaard's critique of Hegel, showing it as characteristic of a critique by the individual will to express, (i.e. act), a subjectivity which breaks away from the conditions of the historically defined social world.

The individual, although responsible for his/her actions is liable, nevertheless, to act according to the class in which it exists. The conflict between individual acts and social acts bring about social consciousness and therewith class consciousness. On another level, this synthesis, this overcoming through action also occurs in language, hence signs. Although this seems to have altered Sartre's definition of subjectivity as the sum of the actions of a particular self, it does not. For just as individual consciousness is itself a *néant*, a void, determined only in action, so is class consciousness in need of a *we* act to define both its collective and social self. However, what makes the *we* act effective must, as inter-subjective necessity, be maintained through language. In *Critique of Dialectical Reason*,<sup>106</sup> these two levels constitute Sartre's "dialectical circularity" of self wherein the self totalises; in other words, in this dialectic, the self passes from its own determined being as action (praxis) into the mode of social consciousness and subjectivity through the use of language, itself a medium of action.

On the surface, Sartre's embrace of Marxism appears to have completely put in question the existentialism of *Nausée* and *Being and Nothingness*, for it threw the individual into the folds both of a History, and of a social Dialectic. However, it would be altogether untrue to claim that Sartre's existentialist Marxism abandoned Roquentin's quest for freedom through self-knowledge, or that of the achievement of the individual of the *pour-soi*, Being-for-itself in a socio-political context. For Sartre extended his theory on the knowledge of the self through the writing of its history, the history of a given life in and through action, developed in *Nausée*, to philosophy. In *Search for a Method*, Sartre pronounced Marxism as "the philosophy of our time,"<sup>107</sup> and existentialism as a peripheral "ideology." But philosophies are now "totalizations of contemporary knowledge,"<sup>108</sup> that is, the story of the present; only this story, this adventure, does not involve that of one individual's life but that of the

structure of the present. In this context, Marxism becomes very important, and inaccurate as it may have seemed to Sartre, nevertheless necessary for the understanding of the modern self. For this self can only become conscious of its being once it is reflected through its action in the world. Therefore, an understanding of the world becomes a necessary element.

It can then be argued that Sartre's 'discovery' of Marxism was merely an act of necessity, and not a necessary identification with the philosophy itself. However, like any adopted system, Sartre had to develop the tools to fit existentialism within the Marxist framework, and this was done in the *Critique* through the development of the dialectical method. There, Sartre criticised Marxism on two levels: first, as historical materialism; second, as dialectical materialism. For Sartre it was existentialism's *raison d'être* "to reconquer man within Marxism."<sup>109</sup> In *Search for a Method*, Sartre introduced the progressive-regressive method. Its object of social-historical experience was formed through projects as the crucial mediation connecting economic determinants with concrete action, which he judged was lacking in Marxism's account of historical materialism. In his account of the project, Sartre sought to account for the subjective experience on the social level:

Only the project, as a mediation between two moments of objectivity, can account for history; that is, for human *creativity*. It is necessary to choose. In effect; either we reduce everything to identity (which amounts to substituting a mechanistic materialism for dialectical materialism) -or we make of the dialectic a celestial law which imposes itself on the Universe, a metaphysical force which by itself engenders the historical process (and this is to fall back into Hegelian idealism) -or we restore to the individual man his power to go beyond his situation by means of work and action. This solution alone enables us to base the movement of totalization upon the *real*.<sup>110</sup>

As such, the progressive-regressive method would seek to give back to the individual in history the *essence* of the universal *cogito*; for only in defining the progress in history as that of identifiable *projects*, products of individuals in isolation or in groups, would the making of the human self in history emerge. What remains disturbing in this approach is Sartre's readiness to posit the individual as an absolute-subject, a creator, in other words a god. He reproaches Marxism for overriding the role of the individual as creator, as actor in the History of the present. On this he states:

It is *inside* the movement of Marxist thought that we discover a flaw of such a sort that despite itself Marxism tends to eliminate the questioner from his investigation and to make of the questioned, the object of absolute Knowledge. The very notions which Marxist research employs to describe our historical society -exploitation, alienation, fetishism, reification, etc. -are precisely those which most immediately refer to existential structures ... In view of this default ... existentialism, at the heart of Marxism and taking the same givens, the same Knowledge, as its point of departure, must attempt in its turn ... the dialectical interpretation of History.<sup>111</sup>

In *Critique*, Sartre presented the dialectic in the Hegelian-Marxist version as both the method of thought and the structure of reality.<sup>112</sup> He maintained that the dialectic centred in human reason, and argued strongly against the Marxist interpretation which locates it in nature, which he took to imply that individuals were determined by nature. This also reflects his rejection of Marxist dialectics as having been derived from Hegelian dialectics, thereby making the explicit identification of consciousness with being. In his interpretation he followed both Kojève and Hyppolite who decisively rejected the notion of a dialectic of nature.<sup>113</sup> Like the Humanist Pico della Mirandola before him, Sartre refused to allow nature any determining factor on human reasons and motives for action. Although acknowledging that nature constituted the preconditions for human life, he denied that human knowledge could reduce itself to the model of matter.<sup>114</sup>

Also present in the *Critique* is a more evolved theory of *totalisation*. Within this new concept of History, and projects, the individual is able to totalise the events which make up this life thereby achieving a complete narrative of this essence within the whole of History. In Sartre's words, "the investigator must, if the unity of history exists, grasp his own life as the Whole and the Part, as the link between the Parts and the Whole, and the relation of the Parts among themselves, in the dialectical movement of Unification. He must be able to make the leap from his own singular life to History."<sup>115</sup> However, this totalisation is never in itself a process through which the individual in history experiences being-for-itself. On the contrary, the individual remains alienated, the narration of the totality belongs not to the consciousness of the moment of action, but to the writer of History: "In the world of alienation, the historical agent never entirely recognizes himself in his act. This does not mean that historians should not recognize him in it precisely *as* an alienated man. However this may be, alienation is at the base and at the summit; and the agent never undertakes anything which is not the negation of alienation and which does not fall



back into an alienated world."<sup>116</sup>

With this we are left to ponder the meaning of this liberation, this freedom that Sartre proposes. If one remains incapable of acknowledging one's act in terms of the totality of the Whole as a Part, is there a moment in history when one ceases to be alienated? This position points to possible answers, which may to a certain degree be related. First, the agent, writer or reader of history, remains outside the totality in so far as he/she seeks freedom in the imagination. In this sense, freedom is always my freedom, but it may also be the freedom that I may transmit to others through words. This would only be truly actualised through words that are means to action in the present. What is more, this freedom is also atemporal; it can transcend both time and space, and in so doing it is the ultimate in human freedom which is both individual and inter-subjective. This type of freedom demands that one creates through language.

The second answer to this may be found in Kojève's reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, and more precisely his theory concerning the end of History. Allan Bloom defines Kojève's theory of history:

...the most striking feature of Kojève's thought is his insistence...that for Hegel, and for all followers of Hegel, history is completed, that nothing really new can again happen in the world. ...Kojève easily shows the ineluctable necessity of this consequence for anyone who understands human life to be historically determined, for anyone who believes that thought is relative to time -that is, for most modern men. For if thought is historical, it is only at the end of history that this fact can be known; there can only be knowledge if history at some point stops.<sup>117</sup>

Unlike Kojève, Sartre does not believe that History has ended, but that we await the end of history; for we remain in anguish, desperately seeking to fulfil the nothingness, the existence of which is necessary, as long as the socio-political and economic elements constituting our existence remain to force us into mediation through objectivity, and thus alienation. In fact, Sartre believes that it is with the demise of Marxism, which is the philosophy of this epoch the conditions of which make its presence necessary, that humanity will overcome scarcity and therewith its enslavement to the object. For, unlike Hegel, who defends the idea of actualisation through the other as the only means to self actualisation and hence freedom, Sartre believes that all such activity is alienating activity, which alters the self through

mediation; it denaturalises the self, making it an other unto itself. The difference ultimately lies in the fact that actualisation for Hegel and Marx consists of an inter-subjective socially active actualisation that is achieved through the other (where this other is an object that is either human or otherwise), whereas Sartre seeks the establishment of the absolute-subject, the individual whose presence is merely creation, in other words to establish the divine nature of humanity. In this insistence on individuals always remaining as subjects, as ends in themselves, Sartre remains quite Kantian.

It is clear from Sartre's critique of both Hegel and Marx that he does not see freedom as an activity through which subjectivity actualises itself. He charges Hegel with 'idealism' and Marx with 'materialism', and in both cases the charge remains attached to a neglect of human agency, and the imposition of a transcendent other (universalism, fetishism). However, even within the social context, the Sartrean subject is invariably faced with the choice between being and nothingness; whereas for Hegel as well as for Marx, the affirmation of being is itself a process and not a static state of existence; not a moment, a segment of a history, but the active actualisation of this being. This is not done through a benevolent Universal force, nor through complete identification with the object produced, but it is consciousness reflected and reflecting. For Sartre, consciousness is merely a reflection of an action in a static moment of recognition; otherwise, it is void. Furthermore, consciousness of action is always alienating when passing in or through an object; for "the meaning of human labor is that man reduces himself to inorganic materiality, in order to act materially upon matter and to change his material life. Through transubstantiation, the project that our bodies engrave in the thing assumes the substantial characteristics of that thing, without entirely losing its original qualities. Thus it comes to possess an inert future, within which we shall have to determine our own future."<sup>118</sup>

This form of action is therefore alienating and dehumanising in its effect. However, for Sartre there exists a purer form of action, that of words. As writer, the individual is then able to express both the meaning of a life, its essence, its progress, but without the alienating effect of material labour. Words are the purest form of action as free self actualisation through knowing. Moreover, the writer may be capable of freeing the reader simply through the written word, -i.e. through imagination- an action which remains pure and non-alienating. Writing and reading involve imagination, and are therefore liberating experiences, but it is in writing that complete self-actualisation lies, for the actualisation of the imaginative sense occurs in and through words (action).<sup>119</sup> For the writer not only narrates his/her personal

history, but also that of his/her class, socio-political and economic identity. Within the being of a writer, the totalisation in *Critique* becomes possible, thereby anticipating the moment of post-History, or post-industry where no one would have to labour and express the self and its essence through nature. Only then can *self-creation*, as freedom of imagination and thought, become a possibility.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Part II, Chapter I and the discussion of Weber's definition of freedom in Enlightenment society.

<sup>2</sup>Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup>Quentin Skinner, (ed.), *The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences*, (Cambridge U.P., 1985), p.45.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. especially, J. Derrida, 'Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences', *Writing and Difference*, trans. A. Bass, (London: Routledge, 1978), pp. 278-293. Derrida is very critical of Saussure and Lévi-Strauss showing their failure to overcome the effect of Western metaphysical logocentrism, due to their attachment to a particular hierarchical view of humanity. Also, cf. J. Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, trans. I.H. Grant, (London: SAGE, 1993); M. Foucault, 'What is an Author?', *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. D. F. Bouchard, (Oxford U.P., 1977); J.-F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, trans. G. Bennington & B. Massumi, (Manchester U.P., 1984).

<sup>8</sup>This is most clear in Sartre's misinterpretation of *Dasein's* essence which he believed lies in its existence, thereby promoting a mistaken belief that *Dasein*, as existence, privileges 'human reality's' subjectivity. Fuller discussion of subjectivity in Existentialism will be elucidated in Chapter Two of this Part.

<sup>9</sup>This proclamation was in fact first introduced into the philosophical discourse by Hegel in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller, (Oxford University Press, 1977), p.455, §752: "The Unhappy Consciousness ... is the consciousness of the loss of all *essential* being in this *certainty of itself*, and of the loss even of this knowledge about itself -the loss of substance as well as of the Self, it is the grief which expresses itself in the hard saying that 'God is dead'."

<sup>10</sup>Thomas Docherty (ed.), *Postmodernism*, (Cambridge U.P., 1993), pp. 24-25.

<sup>11</sup>This form of determinism is present in Baudrillard's theory of simulation, Foucault's critique of 'universal history', Derrida's critique of logocentric interpretation of texts, and Lyotard's critique of metanarratives.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup>This is expressed in Baudrillard's theory on simulation, and Derrida's critique of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

<sup>15</sup>In this case, Foucault is commenting on how our consciousness is shaped by an event; for Kant wrote his reflections following the events of the French Revolution, an event which inspired him to write the article advocating that the attainment of enlightenment was present in the very act of revolt. Cf. Section on Foucault in Chapter II below.

<sup>16</sup>Project is here mentioned in the plural to distinguish it from the earlier Enlightenment project in the singular. For although postmodernists, (and this will be the main argument in this study), are critical of the logocentric approach of modernity, they nevertheless pursue a project of freedom in a fragmented form, which does not succeed in separating itself from logocentrism of human nature, but proceeds to posit each individual life as its own centre thereby allowing the 'old metaphysical world' to be populated by a multiplicity of centres.

<sup>17</sup>Derrida's preoccupation with the present is not identical to Foucault's for his is an attempt to de-centre the logocentric approach which makes of the present its focal point for decision making. Further discussion of this point is expounded in the treatment of Derrida's work present in Chapter Two of this Part.

<sup>18</sup>It is important to note at this point the distinctness of Foucault's work from that of the postmodernists. Although essentially *not* a postmodernist, Foucault's work, as we will see in Chapter II of this Part, appears as the bridge between the post-structuralist to what is more commonly known as the postmodernist position. It would be hard to understand Lyotard's critique of



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the 'intellectuals' and his commendation of the 'philosophers' without knowing Foucault's definition of "What is an author?" Similarly, it is equally hard to understand all postmodernist claims concerning the 'death of the subject' without familiarising ourselves with Foucault's reflection on Subjectivity in history. In this sense, Foucault's work should have been put in a separate category altogether, but given the demands of organisation and structure of the text, it has been placed as first in the chapter on the postmodernists.

<sup>19</sup>This concept is expressed very clearly in Baudrillard's critique of Marx in the *Mirror of Production and General Economy of the Sign*; also, Derrida mentions this in his article *From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve*; Lyotard is very critical of the applicability of Marxism to today's economy in both the collection of his *Political Writings*, and the *Postmodern Condition*; Foucault's critique of Marxism and of the Frankfurt School runs also along the same lines.

<sup>20</sup>Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>21</sup>Cf. Michel Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings*, trans. Alan Sheridan and others, Lawrence D. Kritzman (ed.), (New York & London: Routledge, 1988), p. 34. Also, Jean Baudrillard, *Baudrillard Live*, ed. Mike Gane, (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 21-23.

<sup>22</sup>This is not to disregard postmodern writers in Germany, or in the United States, but that as Peter Dews and others have recognised, postmodernists are equally post-structuralists, the majority of whom are French, and belong to the French intellectual elite.

<sup>23</sup>Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), p. 253.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 253-54.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 254.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 249-50 [my italics]. It is precisely this brand of 'timeless consciousness' that postmodernists do not accept either in Sartre or in Hegel. Consciousness is this moment in which I shape my judgement and consequently act upon it. It cannot be something that is latent in everything I think and do, because I cannot be conscious of any moment which preceeded the 'now'.

<sup>28</sup>That is, postmodernism shares with Sartre's existentialism a deep interest in German phenomenology, more specifically Husserlian scepticism regarding positivist reason, but unlike Husserl and more in line with Sartre's position, it maintains equal aversion to teleological -socially bound- reason.

<sup>29</sup>Although there is a general critical spirit of the capacity of Marxism to resolve the problems of Modernity, as Sartre has defined it, it is mainly in Jean Baudrillard's work that a stringent critique of Marxism is clearly outlined. Although Baudrillard's critique may have some relevance here, his work is not fully expounded for several reasons. First, a complete critique of Marxism, such as the one implied in Baudrillard's work, is not needed to establish the definition of modernity in Hegelian terms. Second, the schematic outline of Baudrillard's position would have proved inadequate to bring forth the richness of his critique. Moreover, the underlying thread of the argument relies on the establishment of the relationship between the Hegelian theory of subjectivity, and that of postmodernism, and not the Marxist interpretation of Hegel, itself in need of far reaching study that cannot be undertaken in this work. References to Marx and postmodernism's critique of Marxism will be made in the same spirit that most postmodernists interpret Marx, i.e. as the failed actualisation of a philosophy which appeared as the only alternative to capitalism until the end of the 1960s. Elsewhere, all references to modernity and its definition refer to the Hegelian model.

<sup>30</sup>This point is mentioned here as reference. I chose not to enter into this fully because a full exposé would make the presentation much too long, and would not add much to the argument I am trying to make. However, it will be mentioned briefly where required with the necessary citations and notes.

<sup>31</sup>Cf. Michel Foucault, "Qu'est-ce-que les lumières?", *Magazine Littéraire*, (Paris: mai, 1984), p. 39.

<sup>32</sup>Cf. Jean Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, trans. Philip Mairet, (London:

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Methuen, 1970).

<sup>33</sup>These critiques Sartre expresses in *Being and Nothingness* (1943) Book III against Hegel in particular, and in *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960) against Marx.

<sup>34</sup>Such arguments are presented by Mark Poster, *Existential Marxism in Postwar France: From Sartre to Althusser*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

<sup>35</sup>*Existentialism and Humanism*, is a commentary that Sartre presented in defense of existentialism against the polemics expressed by both sides, right and left, and in doing so he proceeded to define what it implies in practical terms.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 27-28. Sartre defines Heidegger's Dasein by the French expression "réalité humaine," by which he means "human existence *not* in the abstract Scholastic sense of "*existentia*" but in the sense of concrete, lived existence with its possibilities of transcending; human existence in opposition to the existence of a thing, which is blocked into itself." W. Desan, *The Tragic Finale*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 30; cf. also, M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, (Halle: Niemeyer, 1929), p. 42; also De Waelhens, *La Philosophie de Martin Heidegger*, (Louvain, 1942), p. 35.

<sup>37</sup>*Existentialisme et humanisme*, *ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>38</sup>Sartre often employs praxis to express action, activity, a doing.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.* p. 28 my italics; it is important to note here that the leap here is important, for it eventually justifies Sartre's own leap, so to speak, toward the recognition and embracing of Marxism as the philosophy of the age. Without this leap, it would seem impossible for Sartre to have adopted a Marxist strategy which situates the individual living an existential present within a theory of social interaction and an identification with the present in terms of constitutive conditions and not simply obstacles and means towards individualist ends, as the early existentialism in *Being and Nothingness* suggests.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup>In *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes, (London: Methuen, 1966), Sartre defines consciousness as that which exists outside being, and therefore which is excluded from the phenomenon of existence; its appearance or experience is always that which lies in and through being, but does not constitute it.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 436; this position will be explained further in the discussion below on the nature and extent of freedom in Sartre's philosophy.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, lxxiv.

<sup>46</sup>W. Desan, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>47</sup>Cited in Desan, *ibid.*, p. 48; B&N, p. 172.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>52</sup>Sartre, B&N, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 256.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 268, 339, 351. Desan, *op. cit.*, p. 68. Desan cites an interesting passage from Sartre's *Roads to Liberty*, Vol. III, *The Reprieve*, where the look has not only an epistemological value concerning the existence of the Other but also concerning my own existence: (Daniel in a letter to Mathieu, the philosopher): "And you too, skeptic and scoffer as you are, *you are seen*. But you don't know it. I can easily describe that look: it is nothing; it is a purely negative entity: imagine a pitch-dark night. It's the night that looks at you, but it's a dazzling night, in fullest splendor; the night behind the day. I am flooded with black light; it is all over my hands and eyes and heart, and I can't see it. Believe me, I first loathed this incessant violation of myself; as you know, I used to long to become invisible, to go and leave no trace, on earth or in men's hearts. What anguish to discover that look as universal medium from which I can't escape! But what a relief as well! I know at last that I am. I adapt for my own use, and to your disgust, your prophet's foolish wicked words: 'I think therefore I am,' which used to trouble me so sorely, for the more I thought, the less I seemed

to be; and I say: 'I am seen, therefore I am.' I need no longer bear the responsibility of my turbid and disintegrating self: he who sees me causes me to be; I am as he sees me. I turn my eternal, shadowed face towards the night, I stand up like a challenge, and I say to God: here am I. Here am I as you see me, as I am. What can I do now? You know me, and I do not know myself. What can I do except support myself. And you, whose look eternally creates me -do support me. Mathieu, what joy, what torment! At last I am transmuted into myself. Hated, despised, sustained, a presence supports me to continue thus forever. I am infinite and infinitely guilty. But I *am*, Mathieu, I am. Before God and before men, I *am*. *Ecce homo*." (p. 407).

<sup>55</sup>Sartre, B&N, *ibid.*, p. 275.

<sup>56</sup>In Genet's case, writing became the instrument through which he regained this lost subjectivity, for in and through his writing he was able to reach fame and reknown, and hence the feeling of pride overcame his original feeling of shame and alienation.

<sup>57</sup>Cited in Desan, *ibid.*, p. 72; B&N, *ibid.*, p. 292f.

<sup>58</sup>Cf. Sartre, *No Exit*, (New York: Knopf, 1947), p. 61. "So this is hell. I'd never have believed it. You remember all we were told about torture chambers, the fire and brimstone, the burning marl. Old wives' tales! There's no need for redhot poker. Hell is other people!"; Desan, *ibid.* p. 72f.

<sup>59</sup>Sartre, *No Exit*, *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup>Cf. Part II, Chapter I, "Hegel's Enlightenment".

<sup>61</sup>W. T. Stace, *The Philosophy of Hegel*, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1924), p. 142, § 189.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 71, § 96.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 72, § 96.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 73, § 97.

<sup>66</sup>According to Hegel, "Something is the first 'negation of negation', as simple *existent* self-relation." G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. W.H. Johnston & L.G. Struthers, (London: Unwin, 1951), Vol I., p. 132. Although Hegel makes it clear that this determination of something, or rather, the determination of all the various abstractions in thought, including thought itself, as something, is extremely important in taking thought beyond the stage of abstract universality, e.g. from existence, life and thought, etc. to what exists, what lives and what thinks, etc., it is still merely the beginning. For, he states: "something is still a very superficial determination" (*ibid.*, 128). For, even though something has being in itself, this being-in-itself is indeterminate, particularly insofar as it is the self-identity of negativity. In fact, as the self-identity of negativity, being-in-itself can be said to be absolute nothing, or rather, actual absolute nothing, even or especially in comparison to the nothingness with which we began the Science, or the general negativity which is supposed to be opposed to reality (*ibid.*). These are only forms of what Hegel calls *abstract negativity* (*ibid.*).

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, § 98.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 74, § 99.

<sup>69</sup>In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel describes the coming to consciousness through the metaphorical 'struggle for life and death' during which I am forced to recognise the limits of my existence, for I am faced with the position of being either victorious or annihilated. This struggle forces me to stand out of my private realm of consciousness of 'I am I' and to recognise that I am capable of being not-I, or nothingness through the will of the other. This is the struggle which forces me to consciousness of my being 'in-the-world'. For Hegel, I am never fully aware of myself unless I am able to recognise where I stand in the world. It is in this struggle that I am wrenched away from my Sartrean consciousness in order for me to be, or to continue in existing. This struggle, unless in extreme circumstances such as war, does not occur in these terms, but occurs on the socio-political level, and for this reason the Other does not need to be another human being, but can be the State itself, as well as the socio-political structure.

<sup>70</sup>Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, *op. cit.* p. 11.

<sup>71</sup>Hegel, *Phenomenology*, *op. cit.*, p. 94, § 127.

<sup>72</sup>Sartre, B&N, *op. cit.*, p. 301.

- <sup>73</sup>Cf. Part II, Chapter I.
- <sup>74</sup>Trans. Introduction, B&N, op. cit., p. xiii.
- <sup>75</sup>Ibid., pp. xiii-xiv.
- <sup>76</sup>Cited by H. E. Barnes, *ibid.*, p. xiv; Sartre, *The Psychology of Imagination*, (New York: Knopf, 1952), p. 269.
- <sup>77</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>78</sup>Ibid.; Sartre, *ibid.*, p. 271. Italics added.
- <sup>79</sup>Sartre, *Existentialisme et humanisme*, op. cit., p. 29.
- <sup>80</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>81</sup>Ibid. p. 32 my italics.
- <sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 33.
- <sup>83</sup>This distinction is of primary importance to Sartre. In fact, Sartre is highly critical of Descartes' formula as it does suggest that being is there identical with consciousness. For Sartre, it would be more precise if Descartes would have stated: "I think that I think then I am," the result of which would be the double nihilation of the second I think and the I am leaving one with the formula that I know that I exist because I think. Cf. Translator's introduction, B&N, op.cit., pp. vii-x. Also, Wilfrid Desan, *The Tragic Finale*, op. cit.
- <sup>84</sup>*Existentialisme et ...*, op. cit., p. 45.
- <sup>85</sup>Ibid., pp. 51-52.
- <sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 51.
- <sup>87</sup>Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes, (London: Routledge, 1991); cf. Part IV, ch. 1.: Freedom: The First Condition of Action, pp. 433-481.
- <sup>88</sup>Hugh Silverman (ed.), "Sartre's Words on the Self," *Jean Paul Sartre*, (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), p. 87.
- <sup>89</sup>Iris Murdoch, *Sartre: Romantic Rationalist*, (London: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 39.
- <sup>90</sup>Ibid. p. 40.
- <sup>91</sup>Sartre, *Existentialism*, *ibid.*, p. 55 my italics.
- <sup>92</sup>Jean Paul Sartre, *Nausea*, trans. Hamish Hamilton, (New York: New Directions, 1962); also cited in Murdoch, *ibid.*, p. 41.
- <sup>93</sup>Sartre establishes this notion of *Becoming* in his later works *Search For A Method* (1960), and *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960), however I do believe that this very notion, albeit not in terms of the Hegelian *Aufhebung*, was implicitly present in Sartre's earlier definition of existentialism.
- <sup>94</sup>Silverman, op. cit. p. 87.
- <sup>95</sup>This is defined by Sartre as follows: "Selfness represents a degree of nihilation carried further than the pure presence to itself of the pre-reflective cogito -in the sense that the possible which I am is not pure presence to the for-itself as reflection to reflecting, but that it is *absent-presence*." *Being & Nothingness*, op. cit., p. 103.
- <sup>96</sup>Jean Paul Sartre, *What is Literature?*, trans. B. Frechtman, (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 45.
- <sup>97</sup>Ibid., pp. 14-15.
- <sup>98</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>99</sup>This is clearly argued in *Existentialism and Humanism*, *ibid.*, p. 29.
- <sup>100</sup>Jean Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes, (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1963), p. 9.
- <sup>101</sup>Ibid., p. 33n.
- <sup>102</sup>Ibid., p. 85.
- <sup>103</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>104</sup>Ibid., p. 87.
- <sup>105</sup>Ibid., pp. 9-10n.
- <sup>106</sup>Jean Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith, (London:



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NLB, 1976), henceforth will be referred to as *Critique*.

<sup>107</sup>Search, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., p. 4; *Critique*, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>109</sup>Cited in Mark Poster, *Existential Marxism in Postwar France: From Sartre to Althusser*, op. cit., p. 267.

<sup>110</sup>Search, op. cit., p. 99.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., p. 175; *Critique*, op. cit., pp. 107-108.

<sup>112</sup>*Critique*, ibid., p. 119.

<sup>113</sup>A. Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, trans. J. Nichols, (New York: Cornell U.P., 1980), p. 217; Jean Hyppolite, *Genèse et structure de la phénoménologie de l'esprit de Hegel*, (Paris: 1946), pp. 35, 235, 246.

<sup>114</sup>*Critique*, op. cit., pp. 149, 124.

<sup>115</sup>*Critique*, ibid., p. 143.

<sup>116</sup>Search, op. cit., p. 99n.

<sup>117</sup>Kojève, op.cit., pp. x-xi.

<sup>118</sup>*Critique*, op. cit., p. 246.

<sup>119</sup>This, of course, is reminiscent of the humanist association of *verba* and *res*, the word and the thing (in which case it is here the deed, but as isolated moment of existence all acts become objectified moments, or things that can be captured through language).

## Chapter II: Subjectivity & Freedom in Postmodernist Critique of Modernity

This chapter seeks to define what constitutes for each of the three authors, Foucault, Lyotard, and Derrida, subjectivity as actualised moment in society. It has a twofold objective. First, it examines the definition of liberty as subjective self-actualisation in the world of each author, and shows how this definition breaks with the earlier definition of liberty given by Hegel. Second, it points out the elements uniting the authors' diverse approaches in what they define as constituting the actualisation of subjectivity in contemporary society with that of Jean Paul Sartre. It has to be mentioned that Foucault's work is not taken here to be a classic representative of the postmodern standpoint, such as it is identified for instance by Jean-François Lyotard. However, Foucault's influence on postmodernism is quite evident, which renders its examination necessary. Moreover, Foucault's work is itself a continuous commentary on the phases of postmodernism. His early writings express in clear terms the early phase of postmodernist concern with the absence of freedom in modernity. Whereas his later writings respond to the earlier stages in a manner that may have seemed, and have indeed been deemed by authors such as Habermas, to stand in opposition to earlier positions. The present examination of Foucault's work takes into consideration these changes, and makes an effort to interpret them in terms of his later work. Therefore, the section on Foucault presents the author's adherence to Hippolyte's interpretation of Hegel, the critique of Enlightenment rationality, and what constitutes an 'author' in society. Lyotard's work is concerned with the effects of technology, innovation, national and international politics have on the individual in society; in his political writings he takes pains to show that individuals in society have been deprived of an ideology that is capable of arresting the capitalist system in its mad progress toward the dehumanisation of the species. Finally, Derrida presents a philosophical discussion, which attempts to ground subjectivity in a de-centred conception of existence, i.e. in and through the deconstruction of language.

### *Foucault's Paradoxical Subject*

In "L'Ordre du discours,"<sup>1</sup> an inaugural address delivered at the Collège de France, Foucault names as his mentors Dumézil, Canguilhem, and Jean Hyppolite. Of the latter's work he made a special mention. Foucault remarked on the importance

of Hyppolite's work which he saw as having "traversed and formulated the most fundamental problems of our age."<sup>2</sup> For Foucault, Hyppolite's gift to contemporary philosophy resided in his "alterations" of Hegelian philosophy. Of these alterations Foucault cited five. First, Hyppolite's translation of the *Phenomenology*, one which granted the Phantom-like shadow of Hegel, "prowling through the Nineteenth Century, and with whom men struggled in the dark," a *presence*. Second, Hyppolite asked the question: "can any philosophy continue to exist that is no longer Hegelian?" Third, Hyppolite brought Hegel's philosophy into modern context, and made modernity the "test of Hegelianism and, beyond that, of philosophy;" fourth, Hyppolite succeeded in transforming the Hegelian theme of "the end of self-consciousness into one of *repeated* interrogation" of established generalisations, which in turn helped "reestablish contact with the non-philosophical" upon which there appeared the possibility of founding a philosophy that was "always present, uncertain, mobile all along its line of contact with non-philosophy, existing on its own, however, and revealing the meaning this non-philosophy has for us." Hyppolite rejected Hegelian philosophy's attempt at totalising because of its failure to withstand the "extreme irregularity of experience;" and finally, "if philosophy must begin as absolute discourse, then what of history, and what is this beginning which starts out with a singular individual, within a society and a social class, and in the midst of struggle?"<sup>3</sup>

In this address, Foucault makes the claim that "our age, whether through logic or epistemology, whether through Marx or through Nietzsche, is attempting to flee Hegel."<sup>4</sup> More specifically, Foucault believes that our age is in fact anxious to overcome *dialectics*, the existence of which has dominated philosophy since Plato, and which found their expression as the ultimate 'science of truth' in Hegelian philosophy. Foucault identified the birth of a new era, or at least the recognition of the need for one, in the work of Nietzsche, and the issue of reason and metaphysics. In his earlier writings, Foucault produced extensive studies of social structures the histories of which, although in line with the Enlightenment's drive to establish reason as the ultimate arbiter for the actualisation of human freedom, demonstrated how this very drive to reason was its own undoing, i.e. from these institutions domination, unreason and unfreedom emerged. This proof that the Enlightenment project for freedom has failed, and that dialectics were unable to account for this failure, provided further conviction that contemporary society is in need of going beyond eighteenth century philosophy, to one which is able to abandon Hegelian phenomenology and scientific reason, in order to answer the question "how is it that a

human subject [is able to take] itself as the object of possible knowledge? Through what forms of rationality and historical conditions? And finally at what price?"<sup>5</sup>

This said, however, Foucault's position concerning Hegel altered in his later writings. In the conclusion to his last work "What Is Enlightenment?"<sup>6</sup>, which interprets Kant's text carrying the same title, Foucault in fact places his own work within the same tradition as that of Hegel and Critical theory in a manner which appears quite paradoxical; it is important to quote him at this point:

We can opt for a critical philosophy which will present itself as an analytical philosophy of truth in general, or else we can opt for a critical thought which will take the form of an ontology of ourselves, an ontology of actuality; it is this form of philosophy which, from Hegel to the Frankfurt School passing through Nietzsche and Max Weber, has founded a form of reflection in which I have tried to work.<sup>7</sup>

In "Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present"<sup>8</sup> Jürgen Habermas looked with uneasiness upon Foucault's last article as he attempted to place it within the author's overall work. This uneasiness is based upon a radical break that Foucault makes with his earlier writings. Habermas cannot contain his surprise when confronted with Foucault's talk of "an 'ontology of actuality' leading through Hegel, Nietzsche, and Max Weber to Horkheimer and Adorno,"<sup>9</sup> and with Foucault's claim to belong to the said tradition, nor understand how Foucault, the 'theoretician of postmodernity', whose work aimed to 'explode' the very idea of an ontology of the subject held by this same tradition, takes upon himself to make such an unbelievable break with his earlier philosophy.

Habermas' bewilderment is justified; however, it is equally widely known to be typical of Foucault to rework his earlier theories, clarify them and even change his position. Moreover, Foucault himself admits that his own consciousness of the very content of his analysis of the crisis of modernity remained, for the better part of the his work, obscure until the moment he thought of the study of *power* as the medium of his political concerns,<sup>10</sup> a 'prise de conscience' which eventually led him to articulate a more elaborate theory of the ontology of the present. By this, Foucault did not presume to study 'subjectivity' as an ontological reality, but the coming into being of a certain belief in such an ontology, which he defines as one of the major elements, the knowledge of which is needed to identify and define the crisis of modernity. Moreover, Foucault's talk of the 'disappearance' of the subject, which he



explicitly discusses in a collection of essays on language, is itself directed against the claim to subjectivity as 'exclusive' to, and inherent in, the person of the philosopher.<sup>11</sup>

On this point it would be necessary to distinguish two periods in Foucault's work. The early period, 1960s and early 1970s, reflects Foucault's preoccupation with the events preceding and following the upheavals of May '68 in France. During this period Foucault perceived what may be called the 'eclipse of the author and the celebration of the text', a view upon which Derrida,<sup>12</sup> and to a certain degree Lyotard, based their philosophy. Foucault believed in the end of the idea that only the author is subject, for he perceived in the events which took place during the May '68 upheavals the clarity of perception of the multitude and its capacity to 'create' its own life-world. This, however, was not to last, and in the second half of the 1970s, Foucault began the journey back to Hegel and dialectics in terms of an elaboration of a theory of Power, further developed into a preoccupation with the diversity of Power, its application and generation in the four volumes of *Histoire de la sexualité*, and culminating in the article "What is Enlightenment?" wherein he recognised quite clearly his adherence to the Hegelian and, what the postmodernists term the modernist, tradition. It is hoped that it will become clear from the following discussion, that Foucault's paradoxical position on the nature of freedom, subjectivity and authorship is based upon his preoccupation with the interpretation of the events shaping his present. This is alluded to in his final article where he suggests that Kant's question reflects the philosopher's interpretation of the effects of the French Revolution. It will be made clear in the following discussion that Foucault's claim concerning the death of the subject occurs in terms of the May '68 events, the aftermath of which permitted the thought that each individual is capable of a making of the self, independently of both existentialist philosophers and Marxist activists. However, like Kant before him, he reached his conclusion too soon, and realised with much disillusionment that a dialectical relationship of power is indeed present, and is the activity which shapes our subjectivity: hence his later identification with Hegel.

In the following discussion, emphasis will be placed on two aspects, both products of the first period of Foucault's work: Foucault's critique of modernity and its metaphysical account of history, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, how this account may be *transgressed* at once, not merely through the writing of 'histories', but also in what defines and permits the development of subjectivity in

contemporary society, i.e. knowledge/consciousness. The first period illustrates the 'ideal' that Foucault pursued, i.e. the 'creation of the self' independently of society. In discovering the dialectics of power, Foucault did not abandon therewith the belief that individuals are capable of self-making; indeed, he believed, as Hegel did before him, in the freedom to make one's self in terms of one's activity, and not through the mere acceptance of a social function; however, unlike Hegel, and more in line with Weber, he perceived socio-political pressures used by institutions as means of oppression and stultification of the senses. Like Sartre, he conceived of freedom as existing in the realm of thought, and hence remaining as actuality merely in the mind and not in lived experience. In this context, it remains befitting that one should consider his critique of modernity as the dominant feature of his thought, and as what influenced to a great extent the development of postmodern thought.

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault defines the traditional theory of history:

Continuous history is the indispensable correlative of the founding function of the subject: the guarantee that everything that has eluded him may be restored to him; the certainty that time will disperse nothing without restoring it in a reconstituted unity; the promise that one day the subject -in the form of historical consciousness- will once again be able to appropriate, to bring back under his sway, all those things that are kept at a distance by difference, and find in them what might be called his abode.<sup>13</sup>

As such, history, as traditionally practiced and conceived, enacts a teleological totalisation of past and present. Unlike this tradition, Foucault sought to study the present not as the mere continuation of the past, but as its product. Foucault's study of modernity through history is discontinuous. He seeks to understand the present by a study of its origin and not as the final product of a predestined evolution. He recognises this explicitly:

I would like to write the history of this prison with all the political investments of the body it gathers together in its closed architecture. Why? Simply because I am interested in the past? No, if one means by that writing a history of the past in terms of the present. Yes, if one means writing the history of the present<sup>14</sup>.

The reasons underlying Foucault's refusal to follow a metanarrative account of history are part of the critique Foucault directs to modernity and its understanding of its own ontology, i.e. its own nature and the factors which lent to its coming-into-

being. Foucault is critical of modern historians in general, and Marxist historians in particular, for their professed claim to knowledge of the truth about history. For Foucault historical writing is of supreme importance due to the effects it engenders in the active political life. Liberals and Marxists alike each produce their own interpretation of a past that is meant to transcend time and blend into the reality of the present. Such interpretations "erase the difference of the past and justify a certain version of the present."<sup>15</sup> They give unmerited power to the authors and engender a distortion of what is present. In this position, Foucault is ultimately Hegelian insofar as he sees the study of history as a study of this moment whose qualitative and quantitative properties are the conditions which combined to allow its coming-into-being in this fashion, all within a given historical period whose outcome might be identical or opposed to that of the element under study.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, Foucault criticises an element in Hegel's theory of history, viz. the Hegelian model which suggests that Enlightenment's reason is the foundation upon which modern socio-political institutions and behaviour are based. For it suggests a belief that reason is ultimately unifying. Foucault's studies of the history of prisons, the birth of the clinic, the history of sexuality and of madness all demonstrate the development of a different reason, one, as is stated by Schiller, which separates and distinguishes. The discontinuous nature of this reason is manifested in all aspects of modern society; it has altered to a tremendous extent its historical development, its purpose and its nature. Within it, the individual, while subjected to the mutilating effects of scientific reason, has lost all sight of an immediate or distant unity with the objective universal. Foucault contests the interpretation of a reality based upon such a teleological understanding of modern reason, but would disagree with the attempt to overcome this problem through the creation of purely economically interested societies, in which the *care for the self* as freedom becomes limited to the extent that individuals' success can only be achieved in the market.

Foucault's historical discontinuity lies at the heart of his analysis of modern reason. Like Hegel, he chose to look at the history of the present, but unlike him he saw the Age of Enlightenment as the modern break with its past, not its continuation:

History becomes divided, in accordance with an ambiguity that it is probably impossible to control, into an empirical science of events and that radical mode of being that prescribes their destiny to all empirical beings, to those particular beings that we are. History as we know, is

certainly the most erudite, the most aware, the most conscious and possibly on which all beings emerge into their precarious, glittering existence, History has become the unavoidable element in our thought... In the nineteenth century, philosophy was to reside in the gap between history and History, between events and the Origin, between evolution and the first rending open of the source, between oblivion and the Return. It will be Metaphysics, therefore, but only in so far as it is Memory, and it will necessarily lead thought back to the question of knowing what it means for thought to have a history. This question was to bear down upon philosophy, heavily and tirelessly, from Hegel to Nietzsche and beyond.<sup>17</sup>

Here, Foucault is making a distinction between the period of history before (history), and after (History) the eighteenth century. Foucault is marking here the great turning point in the Western *episteme* where the transformation of the archaeological foundations takes place in two stages. The first is an attempt to incorporate new knowledge within the old structure of representation. At the second stage the whole method of representation is abandoned. By representation Foucault means the essence of language. In the Classical age language lost its original representative 'being' and became a "function: a system of verbal signs that represents representation."<sup>18</sup> What distinguishes it from other sign-system "is not so much that it is individual or collective, natural or arbitrary, but that it analyses representation in a necessarily successive order. It cannot represent thought instantly, in its totality: it must arrange it, part by part, in a linear order."<sup>19</sup> For Foucault, when viewed from an extreme point, "language in the Classical era does not exist: it functions. Its whole existence is located in its representative role, is limited precisely to that role and finally exhausts it."<sup>20</sup>

The transformation undergone by language since the end of the seventeenth century speaks clearly of the changes transforming Western culture. For Foucault "from the seventeenth century, it is this massive and intriguing existence of language that is eliminated."<sup>21</sup> This function of language as the medium in which signs first originate, and things can be known, ended in the nineteenth century when language became one object of knowledge among others. It was, however, the needed medium for the ever growing scientific discourse, an added status which forced it to submit to further processes of specialisation made in view of the need for a higher degree of purity and neutrality. Due to this process, language became once again, a problem, a barrier, as well as a medium of expression:



Philology, as the analysis of what is said in the depths of discourse, has become the modern form of criticism. Where, at the end of the eighteenth century, it was a matter of fixing frontiers of knowledge, it will now be seeking to destroy syntax, to shatter tyrannical modes of speech, to turn words around in order to perceive all that is being said through them and despite them.<sup>22</sup>

Thus conceived, language, just as did teleological reason and history, seems to have lost its unity and is now reduced to an object of study, a useful instrument of expression whose constituting mechanism is employed at different levels or degrees of density depending on the subject at hand: lower density for scientific expression, higher density for philology, interpretation and criticism. Foucault's analysis of the development and transformation of language sheds a direct light on the spirit of the age: one of separation and specialisation. In maintaining this position, Foucault not only recognises how language ceased to express the life-world in terms of free-play, but also seems to stand in contradiction to the positions held by both Sartre and the postmodernists in so far as they place great emphasis on the role of language as the medium of socio-political analysis and establishment of selfhood. Yet Foucault only seems to contradict them, for in his critique of modernity as overly mechanised and objectified life-world he also adds that language itself, as the expression of this life has equally suffered from this development. Language here is a clear indicator of the life-world, not separate from it.

Foucault's view of the discontinuities which occur in modernity's 'historical' narrative, itself expressed in an objectivised and neutralised language, shows him to be distrustful of modernity's use of history, and that he would perceive with much sympathy the Weberian distrust of history as a base for the *knowledge of the self* as a 'subject' in and through history. He would agree with Weber on the degree to which the content of history may, and does, alter each individual's perception and knowledge of modern society, and the nature of the road towards 'infinite' progress, for he seeks to explode the very idea of a vacuous 'infinity' of life in modernity. Foucault sought to demonstrate that all knowledge eventually leads to further refinement of the application and seizing of 'power' within society. For Foucault, the use of history as a 'justification' for what *is* only masks, and very cleverly, this 'infinite' 'will to power', thereby allowing mechanisms of control to be dissimulated under the guise of the 'will to knowledge'. Unlike Weber, however, Foucault does not see bureaucracy as the only hope for any society to maintain freedom-as-rationality; on the contrary, he sees bureaucracy's drive towards absolute

objectivisation of human relations as yet another vehicle whose object continues to be the masking of the 'will to power'.

Foucault aims to promote a greater proliferation and circulation of knowledge, all types of knowledge, both specialised and general, in the interest of the public. In the wake of the May '68 upheavals, it appeared that specialists of knowledge, such as the intellectuals and philosophers, have become redundant, and that the masses can very well do without them. For, until then, at least in France, the intellectual has traditionally been the product of two different aspects: "his position as an intellectual in a bourgeois society, in the system of capitalist production and within the ideology it produces or imposes" on the one hand, and "his proper discourse to the extent that it revealed a particular truth, that it disclosed political relationships, where they were unsuspected," on the other. However, following the May '68 "upheavals," Foucault recognises a distinct shift in the role that was traditionally played by the intellectual, which took away from the latter the monopoly of knowledge; "in the most recent upheaval, the intellectual discovered that the masses no longer need him to gain knowledge: they *know* perfectly well, without illusion; they know far better than he and they are certainly capable of expressing themselves."<sup>23</sup> Just as this 'event' in history marks the discontinuity of the intellectual as a traditional figure, it also marks the coming into consciousness of the masses of what intellectuals truly represent: intellectuals finally appear as the very "agents of the system of power," and "the idea of their responsibility for 'consciousness' and discourse forms part of the system." As a result, Foucault would then demand of the intellectuals that they should fulfil a new function in society. Theirs is no longer the role of placing themselves "'somewhat ahead and to the side' in order to express the stifled truth of the collectivity; rather, it is to struggle against the forms of power that transform" them into "its object and instrument in the sphere of 'knowledge,' 'truth,' 'consciousness,' and 'discourse.'"<sup>24</sup> It is therefore not up to the intellectual to provide the masses with theory, but it is the responsibility of the intellectual as a member of a social collective to express a theory that "does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice: it is practice."<sup>25</sup> Hence, the role of the intellectual dissolves in the sea of knowledge that is common to all. This is what Foucault understands by the disappearance of the subject from history. For the responsibility for the struggle against the intricate objectifying system of power is the responsibility of each and every individual which cannot be theorised, but only practiced on the "local and regional " levels. In other words, it is "a struggle against power, a struggle aimed at revealing and undermining power where it is most invisible and insidious. It is not to "awaken consciousness"

that *we* struggle (the masses have been aware for sometime that consciousness is a form of knowledge; and consciousness as the basis of subjectivity is a prerogative of the bourgeoisie), but to sap power, to take power; it is an activity conducted alongside those who struggle for power, and not their illumination from a safe distance. A "theory" is the regional system of this struggle."<sup>26</sup> The "we" that Foucault uses here may very well denote the "intellectual" class to whom he clearly believes that he and his interlocuter, Gilles Deleuze, belong. Therefore, the intellectuals can no longer see themselves as a separate, rather privileged, class of society, but have to recognise that they too have been the instruments and legitimisers of power against which they now have to take up the struggle in terms of a theory that is itself practice.

How does this responsibility of the intellectual toward the unravelling of power express itself? Foucault answers: in and through the language of transgression, or more precisely in and through the expression of a language which breaks with all taboos, which "opens onto a scintillating and constantly affirmed world, a world without shadow or twilight, without that serpentine "no" that bites into fruits and lodges their contradictions at their core."<sup>27</sup> Transgression is the method through which the logocentric, metaphysically centred universe is put into question, for in its being as the overcoming of limits, it enters into "the space where the divine functions."<sup>28</sup> Philosophy now has to question "an origin without positivity and an opening indifferent to the patience of the negative." It is the nature of transgression, which is neither positive nor negative, which allows it to supersede dialectics, for in the questioning of the divine "no form of dialectical movement, no analysis of constitutions and of their transcendental ground can serve as support for thinking about such an experience or even as access to this experience."<sup>29</sup>

What sort of language is this that intellectuals may use in order to discover the "experience of finitude and being, of the limit and transgression?"<sup>30</sup> Foucault admits quite easily that there is no such language, and it would not help to express such experience in analogy for this would cause it to fall back into dialectics; rather, he suggests that it would be better to allow this experience to speak "from the depths where its language fails, from precisely the place where words escape it, where the subject who speaks has just vanished, where the spectacle topples over before an upturned eye -from where Bataille's death has recently placed his language."<sup>31</sup> In this Foucault identifies the breakdown of "philosophical subjectivity and its dispersion in a language that dispossesses it while multiplying it within the space



created by its absence;" and yet he acknowledges that one may not see this as the end of philosophy, "but rather the end of the philosopher as the sovereign and primary form of philosophical language."<sup>32</sup>

However, if the disappearance of the intellectual, (and the death of the philosopher), as 'subject' did take place due to the May '68 events, does this mean that subjectivity itself vanishes, and is denied any existence? In effect, the earlier writings cited above indicate that this might very well be the case; that is, that Foucault sought to behead the original claimants to 'subjectivity' in humanism, namely the artist, the author, the composer. Nevertheless, in so doing, he also aspires, and this is particularly clear in his comments on the May '68 upheavals, that every individual, in so far as this individual is a possessor of knowledge, is capable of creating, as a product of his/her own *curiosity*, a *self* that is of his/her own making, i.e. the possibility of making a subjectivity of one's own. In an interview which took place in 1984, shortly before his death, Foucault answered, in response to the question what would individuals do with the plethora of knowledge accorded to them through the media, that "one of the main functions of teaching was that the training of the individual should be accompanied by his being situated in society. We should now see teaching in such a way that it allows the individual to change at *will*, which is possible only on condition that teaching is a possibility always being offered."<sup>33</sup>

Does this, however, indicate that the subject, who is his/her own creator, is freed from the exclusive claims to creation and subjectivity traditionally coveted by the writer, the poet, the philosopher? In the article "What is an Author?," Foucault makes a clear distinction between what constitutes and defines a simple 'writer', and an 'author', where the latter's work is clearly defined in terms of its originality and creativity. He drew the distinction between Ann Radcliffe, whose work introduced a new genre of literature in the nineteenth century, namely the Gothic Romance, and creative writing such as that of Marx and Freud. For Foucault, Radcliffe's novels cannot be called 'creations' for their uniqueness "means that there are certain elements common to her works and to the nineteenth-century Gothic Romance ... On the other hand, Marx and Freud, as "initiators of discursive practices," not only made possible a certain number of analogies that could be adopted by future texts, but, as importantly, they also made possible a certain number of *differences*. They cleared the space for the introduction of elements other than their own, which, nevertheless, remain within the field of discourse they initiated."<sup>34</sup> That is, Marx and Freud seem



to have 'transgressed' the language of their age, and ventured to introduce differences which eventually came to express discursive practices. According to this distinction, it is obvious that Foucault does not regard all writers as authors, and what's more, not all knowledge is equal in importance. Would this indicate that Marx and Freud had both a more developed 'subjectivity' than Ann Radcliffe, and if so who is able to make such a distinction?

What distinguishes Radcliffe's novels from Marx's and Freud's appears to be basically social in character, at least in terms of the amount of knowledge the work produced seems to be able to generate. In determining and introducing a set of 'differences', Marx and Freud were able to inspire a whole tradition of thought, a host of complementary books written and discussed on the subject their work has differentiated. How would this distinction, however, relate to subjectivity? In essence, for Foucault subjectivity cannot be defined in terms of authorship, for he makes clear that the act of having written a book, albeit a substantially original and creative book, means that one is an author by 'function,' but not an 'ontological' subject. This is clear in the essay "What is an Author?" in which he refers quite constantly to the writer as "author-function." Foucault invariably insists on breaking away from the Humanist tradition which sought to glorify the author, and endow him/her with divine qualities.

Yet Foucault remains, nevertheless, attached to two very important positions which somehow lie in contradiction with this claim. First, that subjectivity is the product of a form of consciousness, a consciousness of the self, and especially of the moment at which this self is able to be self-created through a specific type of care. For this consciousness to come about, it must do so, as Weber would agree, through unmediated knowledge, i.e. knowledge which is not party to the manipulation and alterations of the systems of power. It is therefore achieved through reading and writing, through the media and through thought. On the other hand, Foucault maintains that thought itself, in so far as it functions, is no longer a theory, but echoing Sartre he states that "as soon as it offends or reconciles, attracts or repels, breaks, dissociates, unites or reunites; it cannot help but liberate and enslave. Even before prescribing, suggesting a future, saying what must be done, even before exhorting or merely sounding an alarm, thought, at the level of its existence, in its very dawning, is in itself an action -a perilous act."<sup>35</sup> Therefore, language as the medium of thought exchange is itself an action, a very strong and influential act, one that would ultimately change the order of things, and by being such it is a medium

through which subjectivity may be actualised. This of course would stop us from denying subjectivity to intellectuals whose primary 'activity' and function in society is to disseminate knowledge, for although the average individual may know, he/she must know through a source, and not simply from his/her function in society. Otherwise, why would the intellectual/philosopher/writer/novelist... etc. produce any work at all; indeed, why would Foucault himself be engaged in such a philosophical debate?

Foucault's answer to this lies in his affirmation that it would do every one much good to forego the knowledge of the source of the information, i.e. for each individual to ignore on purpose the author of the work that is being read. Yet at one and the same time he acknowledges the necessity for 'curiosity', for it signifies for him a certain amount of 'care', a preoccupation and deep interest in the subject of knowledge at hand.<sup>36</sup> Would not one who cares for the quality of knowledge express some curiosity as to the origin of this knowledge? Indeed, despite Foucault's consistent claim that an author's name is of no importance, and that he wished to ask publishers to produce unnamed, unsigned books,<sup>37</sup> the distinctions he makes between Radcliffe, and Marx and Freud, are based on what these names signify; and what's more, Foucault himself does not hesitate to place his own signature underneath the article that demands that names be unknown. We are therefore forced to reject Foucault's assertions concerning the importance of authorship, or at least recognise Foucault's effort to be one of deep desire to distance his own theory of language from that of Humanism. Yet we are forced to concede, and, in this, to agree with Habermas, that Foucault's position regarding subjectivity is at best paradoxical, and lends support to the belief, as his later writings on sexuality indicate, that he is in quest of a definition of subjectivity that is highly individual. In this Foucault follows Weber who suggests that freedom for self-constitution is and ought to be a freedom from the shaping of the self by the system of power and institutions; but unlike him, he does not propose a socially coherent ideology, or rather any schema for a social context. In Foucault's world, the individual is left to shoulder the responsibility of both the social and private spheres of his/her life, a responsibility that is offset by the availability of a wide variety of knowledge from which individuals choose what their needs demand.

Following the idea of the language of transgression, which in light of his analysis of Bataille's texts he took to be expressed in our sexuality, Foucault proposed in the series *History of Sexuality* the act of the *creation of the self* as the

only means through which any real knowledge of this *self* may be known to the subject who is this particular self's creator. However, this is not an act that would allow one simply to acknowledge one's own sexual nature; on the contrary, given that the experience of sexuality is taken by Bataille to signify *la petite mort*, 'the little death,' sexuality appears here as a metaphor for what accords the individual the transgression of the limits of being, i.e. death, but while still alive. Therefore, the knowledge of the self through sexuality pertains also to the knowledge of being and non-being at once: it is the movement of *aufhebung*, the retaining and passing away of being. This brings back a familiar line of thought prominent in postmodernism, one which seeks to break away from a socially imposed understanding of the self, and proposes that any explanation emanating from such a description is itself rooted in metanarratives, i.e. preconceived teleology. The notion that one may be able to create the self, the content of one's subjectivity, and that this be the only means by which subjectivity may be expressed and acknowledged, demonstrates that Foucault remains bound to the logocentric idea of creation as subjectivity, and restricts this to the realm of 'thought-inspired' activity. Which is to say that, much in the existentialist tradition of Sartre, it is not necessarily intellectual, or even linguistic; but nevertheless, it is an activity that may very well be silent, as the silence of the language of transgression, but it is *thought* which shapes and determines being as subjectivity. Therefore, action as such may not be necessary for subjectivity, but thought is, and action, i.e. the verbal expression of thought, is none other than a by-product of its actualisation. I would agree with Richard Rorty<sup>38</sup> who sees Foucault's weakness in the fact that his work seems *unwilling* to propose a solution, because it sees its main purpose as the accurate definition of the problem, the recognition of the here-and-now as a social reality which *is*, and not one that is peered at through a given ideology, or an 'ought', this 'ought' being either positivist or teleological. As such, the recognition of the problem is the reflection on the *now*, as presence, and does not imply, as Foucault consistently made clear, action.

Foucault's critique of modernity does not stop at analysing how reason affirms itself and maintains a hold on discourse, but goes beyond it to see how it transforms and shapes the progress of humanity. Social organisation represents for Foucault the epitome of the exercise of reason in a social context. Foucault's historical study of institutions and relation of power are not performed with the purpose of studying the phenomenon of power, but to discover the different modes by which in the Western culture individuals become 'subjects'.<sup>39</sup> In *The Order of Things* Foucault sends this message:

To all those who still wish to talk about man, about his reign or his liberation, to all those who still ask themselves questions about what man is in his essence, to all those who wish to take him as their starting-point in their attempts to reach the truth, to all those who, on the other hand, refer all knowledge back to the truths of man himself, to all those who refuse to formalize without anthropologizing, who refuse to mythologize without demystifying, who refuse to think without immediately thinking that it is man who is thinking, to all these warped and twisted forms of reflection we can answer only with a philosophical laugh -which means, to a certain extent, a silent one.<sup>40</sup>

Clearly, Foucault's message is directed to the "human sciences," which are the fields of psychology, sociology, and literary/cultural studies, together with the mass of disciplines formed from their sub-division. The rise of these disciplines heralds for Foucault the return to representation. Unlike Classical representation which lacked a concept of individuality, this type is based upon the study of the unconscious, the dark side of humanity, the Other. These disciplines try to provide the subject with a definition of the true self, subjectivity, values, which traverse the whole of one's actions in the world. Foucault's laughter -transgression- stems from his belief that the 'subject' they are aiming to define does not and cannot exist under the auspices of modern reason, for the method of representation of all modern human sciences breaks with the Classical association of representation and consciousness. The separation of these two concepts results in a constant process of demystification, the unveiling of a truth that is less apparent, but more profound.<sup>41</sup> In their very purpose, these disciplines are posited to transform human beings into subjects, and they do so through a method of "objectification." They represent modes of "inquiry which try to give themselves the status of sciences; for example, the objectivizing of the speaking subject in *grammaire générale*, philology, and linguistics. Or again, ..., the objectivizing of the productive subject, the subject who labors, in the analysis of wealth and of economics."<sup>42</sup> In their multiplicity, they pose as the fragmentation of the unity of the social entity as subject and object in society, and henceforth fragment the very essence of philosophy, in both the Platonist and Hegelian sense, viz. a comprehensive understanding of the unity of *the self* both as an individual and a social element. This explains philosophy's silence; for as expressed earlier in terms of transgression, philosophy has not, at least not yet, developed a language of transgression, and therefore it stands silent, for in its silence it nevertheless speaks; it speaks every time an individual is able to *think* and *will* his/her own subjectivity.



In Foucault's study of the subject, the human sciences appear to posit to consciousness an Other that is itself, and that in the final synthesis becomes objectified; it becomes its own telos. Just as for Hegel this period of "self conceit" is bound to be dissolved because of the authentic character, the will to truth, of consciousness, where a union with the authentic universal will come-into-being, Foucault's analysis of reason, which he associates with the Nietzschean "will-to-knowledge," sees consciousness to be impaired, incapable of arriving at a complete synthesis, for it has been deprived of its antithesis; this allows the creation of an *empty subject*, because there is no guarantee for any type of universal or even collective/social knowledge. For Foucault:

Even in the expanded form it assumes today, the will to knowledge does not achieve a universal truth; man is not given an exact and serene mastery of nature. On the contrary, it ceaselessly multiplies the risks, creates dangers in every area; it breaks down illusory defences; it dissolves the unity of the subject; it releases those elements of itself that are devoted to its subversion and destruction...; its development is not tied to the constitution and affirmation of a free subject; rather it creates a progressive enslavement to its instinctive violence. Where religion once demanded the sacrifice of bodies, knowledge now calls for experimentation on ourselves, calls us to the sacrifice of the subject of knowledge.<sup>43</sup>

Just as reason's other, unreason, lies hidden in the confines of the Asylums, so is the human Other denied any conscious existence. To modernity, reason with its carefully concealed madness stands as humanity's true 'end'. The future is, however, not as bleak as one imagines, for in his analysis of the exercise of power over the individual, Foucault recognises the presence of individual resistance to such forms of objectification, thereby answering to the short-comings of MacIntyre whose definition of the nature of individuals does not permit any form of independent subjectivity to emerge. In his discourse on the "Subject and Power" he expresses a hopeful note:

Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are. We have to imagine and to build up what we could be to get rid of this kind of political "double bind," which is the simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures.

The conclusion would be that the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state, and from the state's institutions, but to liberate us both from the state and the type of individualization which is linked to the state. We have to

promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries.<sup>44</sup>

In the third volume of *History of Sexuality*, *Le Souci de soi*, Foucault argues that in spite of its 'positive expression of liberty' (in Berlin's sense), stoicism has shown itself to be one of Western Civilization's earliest forms of the "culturing of the self" where one is meant to reflect upon one's nature in order to subordinate it to one's will,<sup>45</sup> thereby gaining a specific knowledge of the self. What's more, stoicism, although confined to the realm of individual thought, had an essentially social dimension, for it sought to become fully aware of what unites and distinguishes individuals. However, this philosophy seems to promote a very passive position, one which refuses to put into action the product of one's thought. The action that Foucault took upon himself to fulfil is that of his unwillingness to adhere to a given position, and yet he does. In writing, apparently the most passive and most un-active of actions, Foucault sought to touch our minds through words, and hence through thought, and by doing so, and in spite of his unwillingness to act, he fulfilled his own subjectivity through action, for the thought he inspired is, in his own words, "in itself an action - a perilous act."

In his earlier writings Foucault expresses a great deal of affinity with existentialist preoccupations. Both are concerned with the liberation of the individual from an identity that has been imposed in and through social convention. Both perceive language, (not as a unitary system, but a constant flux in terms of content and structure), as the medium through which individuals may ultimately define/create their selfhood. What's more, both seek to ground this subjectivity in an act of narration. For Foucault, as for Sartre, words are actions: their capacity to inspire the self cannot be taken simply in terms of what is socially and politically established, but goes beyond this to allow for self-creation. It is significant that for Foucault the distinct fall of modernity's reason into madness occurs at the time when language itself became incapable of expressing our thoughts. As language became 'function' instead of 'action', it lost its capacity to permit the expression of any type of subjectivity. This occurred because language became objectified, permitting the mind to fall into the world of things. For Foucault, language as function indicated the objectification of thought which also meant the death of the subject as independent thought. With this death came the death of the philosopher as subject, for as the 1968 revolts showed, the philosopher/intellectual was no longer representative of the

'objective', 'independent' truth, but was already, in and through his/her use of language as function, deprived of any original and subjective thought. Like the others, the philosopher became an object of power.

In 1968 Foucault expressed quite openly a favourable opinion regarding Sartre's role during these events. Foucault praised Sartre's attempt to raise "the intellectual and political consciousness of the French public."<sup>46</sup> Sartre was equally alluded to as a leftist intellectual with whom Foucault identified: "if the left exists in France ... I think an important factor has been the existence of a left thought and a left reflection ... of political choices made on the left since at least 1960, which have been made outside the parties ... It is because, through the Algerian War for example, in a whole sector of intellectual life also ... there was an extraordinary lively left thought."<sup>47</sup> Foucault is clearly referring here to Sartre, Francis Jeanson and *Les Temps modernes*, which constituted the centre for opposition to the Algerian War.<sup>48</sup> However, Mark Poster is quick to point out the change in Foucault's thought since 1968, and argues that it involved Foucault's development of a theory of Power/Knowledge in the 1970s. Poster contends that "after May 1968 Foucault carried out a reorientation and clarification of ideas that substantially altered the direction of his work. ... Foucault both came to terms with the problematic of Western Marxism and carried it to a new level."<sup>49</sup>

In his later writing, and especially with reference to Hegelian philosophy, Foucault seems to have abandoned the radical claim that the 'subject' of society is dead, and to pursue the Hegelian notion of *becoming*, while maintaining the postmodern 'incredulity toward metanarratives'. The result is to be found in the *History of Sexuality*, in which the creation of the self sought a synthesis, a reconciliation between the self and its social and political reality. Unlike Derrida who refused to acknowledge the interpretation of texts within a given context, Foucault sought to define the act of creating the self, in thought and through narration, in terms of a given historical, social and political context. Yet, his attachment to narratives and the idea of self-creation in thought remain true to their existentialist origins, and incorporate, if only indirectly, Sartre's critique of the Hegelian dialectic and the moment of synthesis. In the process of self-creation, there is also the disbelief in any given social truth, which makes of this act of creation an individualistic, non-social act. As to the conflict that would necessarily arise from the multiplicity of 'consciousnesses', Foucault does not give an answer, and in remaining silent he seems to be echoing Sartre's incapacity to account for this explosion; all that is



indicated is the claim that "it is so." In the following sections it is shown how Lyotard takes up Foucault's critique of the intellectual, and how Derrida attempts to establish a language of transgression in the form of a deconstruction of texts.

### *Lyotard's Postmodern Condition*

In *The Postmodern Condition*,<sup>50</sup> Lyotard defines the word 'postmodern' as designating "the state of our culture following the transformations which, since the end of the nineteenth century, have altered the game rules for science, literature, and the arts."<sup>51</sup> These transformations, Lyotard suggests, are present "in the context of the crisis of narratives."<sup>52</sup> In his text Lyotard seeks to distinguish science from philosophy, where recent science defines uncertainty and philosophy is taken to be one of the more recent originators of metanarratives in Western society. However, it is modernity's project that sought to posit philosophy as a science whose object "does not simply seek regularities, but also seeks "the truth" (some unmovable, eternally existent truth), and is therefore obliged to legitimate the rules of its own game."<sup>53</sup> Lyotard defines postmodernism as "incredulity toward metanarratives,"<sup>54</sup> due to the fact that the influence of science on socio-political life has become such that 'metaphysical philosophy' and its 'metanarrative apparatus of legitimation' is "being dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements ... . Conveyed within each cloud are pragmatic valencies specific to its kind."<sup>55</sup> Although we all live at the intersection of many of these narratives "we do not necessarily establish stable language combinations," and there appear "many different language games" which give rise to "local determinism."<sup>56</sup>

Lyotard claims that postmodernism is the corrective antidote to modernity's failure, for it seeks to free modernity from the 'universalising' Idea, or reason, which meant to make of philosophy a science of truth. Postmodernism is the beginning of the actualisation of the modern project; on this he states: "a work can become modern only if it is first postmodern. Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant."<sup>57</sup> Two claims coexist in Lyotard's definition. First, that modernity is not a 'finished' project, but a failed one, which demands that postmodernism acts as the vehicle needed to perform the necessary act of *reculer pour mieux sauter*, i.e. step back to better jump; second, that postmodernism is an integral part of modernity's achievement, a claim that would force one to wonder if the accomplishment of modernity's project lies as the *end* of



the postmodern *telos*. In this case, how would both projects differ; where do they meet to seek the same end; and finally, what defines this end?

As discussed in the preceding chapters, modernity's *telos* consists of the achievement of freedom through a distinct sense of subjectivity. The method of achieving this, however, seems to have taken on different forms, passing through different channels. Nevertheless, subjectivity as freedom remained a common *telos* regardless of the variety of forms this *telos* has taken. Lyotard sees the modernist project a valid one, but criticises it for its incapacity to overcome the rigid forms it imposes on itself in the name of 'universalising reason,' without which it would have been able to express a dimension of human subjectivity that is "unpresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unpresentable."<sup>58</sup> In this emphasis on the 'unpresentable', Lyotard advocates a subjective expression that is at once collective and individual, but which also defies any form of 'pre-established' definition. This in fact appears quite Sartrean, both in terms of the identity of the individual with the collective, and the rejection of a presentation as *the* form, as opposed to *a* form.

What distinguishes the postmodern artist or writer from the modern resides in the fact that the former "is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by preestablished rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgement, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work."<sup>59</sup> On the contrary, it is the content of their work that will eventually "formulate the rules," which imparts to each work of art the character of "an *event*," whose appearance comes after the fact, and hence "too late"<sup>60</sup> for a rule to be put into operation. This analysis of the postmodern presupposes that all creative projects have a unique character endowing them with the freedom to *be*, regardless of any 'universalising' characteristic, any single Idea, any unique truth. In this case, subjectivity as freedom no longer denotes the Kantian 'universal ego' and 'universal will,' but breaks free from any element or law of conformity, whether social or aesthetic, while nevertheless retaining a common ground, a so-called 'nostalgia for the unattainable'. What unites individuals, therefore, may appear as the postmodern condition itself, rather than some given Kantian 'universal will.' Lyotard suggests that modernity is caught in the Kantian aesthetic of the sublime, for "it

allows the unrepresentable to be put forward only as the missing content; but the form, because of its recognizable consistency, continues to offer to the reader or viewer matter for solace and pleasure."<sup>61</sup>

Lyotard observes that what denies the subject true knowledge of freedom is his or her incapacity, within the determined structure of modernity's systematised knowledge, to be able to express the Kantian sentiment of the sublime, i.e. "a strong and equivocal emotion: it carries with it both pleasure and pain;"<sup>62</sup> but also one that cannot be known, because of its 'unrepresentability'. The sublime "takes place ... when the *imagination* fails to present an object which might, if only in principle, come to match a concept."<sup>63</sup> For the postmodern it is not necessary "to supply reality but to *invent* allusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented."<sup>64</sup> Lyotard seems to be alluding to the sublime which shines from within, the true essence of the subject whose only expression can only take place through the 'invention' of mere 'allusions' rather than be substantialised through any concept. Lyotard takes Sartre's separation of the thing and consciousness to its ultimate, for he too is careful to point out that no measure of actualisation is able to allow subjective expression in society. At best, subjectivity can only be perceived through make-shift inventions.

In this sense, far from having become a subjectivity that is unique and "paralogical,"<sup>65</sup> and as such free, for Lyotard freedom as subjectivity in modernity is forced to deal with the established institutions, products of the Enlightenment tradition, wherein "the decision makers ... attempt to manage ... clouds of sociality according to input/output matrices, following a logic which implies that their elements are commensurable and that the whole is determinable."<sup>66</sup> Enlightenment reason judges its success on the social level by allocating "our lives for the growth of power," the legitimization of which "is based on its optimizing the system's performance -efficiency."<sup>67</sup> The postmodern position opposes this socially deterministic approach, particularly the determinism in the Fichtean and Hegelian traditions which Lyotard quickly dismisses as the products of what he terms the German Universities of the nineteenth century, whose influence never surpassed the walls of their classrooms. For Lyotard, more so than for any other postmodernist, Hegelian dialectics seem to have no import for the modern-postmodern debate; from the nineteenth century he acknowledges Marxist theory, but this only in terms of its failure rather than its capacity to analyse the capitalist mode of production. Lyotard places more emphasis on structuralist, determinist theories of the twentieth century such as the molecular opinions expounded in Luhmann's systems theory. Luhmann

suggests that the system can "only function by reducing complexity," and it must "induce the adaptation of individual aspirations to its own ends."<sup>68</sup> Lyotard demonstrates that such a system operates in a manner such that "the decisions do not have to respect individuals' aspirations: the aspirations have to aspire to the decisions, or at least to their effects."<sup>69</sup> The operation of administrative procedures aim to "make individuals 'want' what the system needs in order to perform well."<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, such system approaches do not work, and this because inconsistencies arising from 'the logic of maximum performance' in the socio-economic field, insofar as it demands "both less work (to lower production cost) and more (to lessen the social burden of the idle population)," can no longer be tolerated since "our incredulity is now such that we no longer expect salvation to rise from the inconsistencies, as did Marx."<sup>71</sup>

In "The Wall, the Gulf, and the Sun"<sup>72</sup> Lyotard speaks of Marxism's failure to maintain its stance as the alternative to, the redemptive Other of, capitalism. In a critique of Marxism that has become typical of French post 1968 style, Lyotard states that "Marxism, the last shoot stemming from both the Enlightenment and Christianity, seems to have lost all its critical power."<sup>73</sup> Just as Christianity, with God's death, appears to have failed in maintaining its credibility as a liberating 'ideology', and the Enlightenment's rational society failed to allow a true expression of freedom through subjectivity to emerge in the practice of reason, so has Marxism's self-positing as the unity of theory and practice failed both in France during the May 1968 revolt, and, at the moment that this article was written (1990), in the fall of the Berlin Wall which brought down with it the whole structure of the Communist East. The fall of the Wall was the last blow to the belief that an alternative to capitalism may be found. Lyotard laments this final capitalist victory for it seems to have left him, and other intellectuals from either side of the Wall, with a sentiment of resigned defeat. Lyotard's cries for 'depoliticization' when writing on Algeria, for 'antipolitics' in reference to May 1968, turned to bitter cynicism narrated in the story of the Sun wherein Lyotard speaks of the effect engendered by Luhmann's "systems theory ... devoted to the problem of adjusting or replacing human bodies so that human brains would still be able to work with the only forms of energy left available in the cosmos -and thus preparing for the first exodus of the negentropic system far from Earth with no return."<sup>74</sup> Lyotard's individual of the future is posited in the nightmarish image of a brain with no body, one all-consuming reason that has completely taken over all aspects of humanity; for as the narrator of this epic, Lyotard claims that "What Man and "its" brain or, better,



the Brain and its man would look like in the days of this final terrestrial challenge, the story did not say."<sup>75</sup>

For Lyotard, Marxism's failure does not merely occur on the 'grand narrative' level, but exists as well in what it implies in terms of the operation of society, i.e. its socio-economic relevance. Although Lyotard continues to believe that "with the logic of *Capital*, the aspect of Marxism that remains alive" is that "which forbids any reconciliation of the parties in the idiom of either one of them,"<sup>76</sup> nevertheless, he recognises that the 'proletariat', defined as the "authentic subject of modern human history,"<sup>77</sup> itself a part of this struggle, no longer exists in modern society. What is even more tragic in Lyotard's eyes, is not merely the absence of the 'proletariat' as a party in the debate between labour and capital, but also that "the court required (the court capable of equitably hearing the two parties, labor and capital) didn't exist."<sup>78</sup> In the absence of these necessary elements capitalism's victory was inevitable, and with this victory Marxist criticism has become "obsolete, even tedious;" as the "ghost" haunting capital's progress, Marxism "has now vanished, dragging the last critical grand narrative with it off the historical stage."<sup>79</sup> This occurred because in the "process of practical critique, the working classes as such have played, are playing, and will play no role;"<sup>80</sup> on this absence of action Lyotard bases the claim that the very 'subject' of 'labour', the proletariat, has been denied action-in-the-world due to the international labour movement's lack of common historical consciousness, displayed in the movement's dissipation "into local institutions that claim only to defend the rights of specific groups of workers."<sup>81</sup> In their struggle against the positivism of capitalist society, representatives of Marxism in the West, such as the Frankfurt School or the group *Socialisme ou barbarie*, to which Lyotard himself belonged, "preserved and refined the critical model in opposition to this [positivism's] process."<sup>82</sup> However, Lyotard suggests that this effort was already out of touch with the development of society, for "the social foundation of the principle of division, or class struggle, was blurred to the point of losing all of its radicality; we [Marxists] cannot conceal the fact that the critical model in the end lost its theoretical standing and was reduced to the status of a "utopia" or "hope," a token protest raised in the name of man or reason or creativity, or again of some social category -such as the Third World or the students- on which is conferred in extremis the henceforth improbable function of critical subject."<sup>83</sup> In this critique of Marxism as no longer representative of what in fact occurs in the market, Lyotard is joined by Baudrillard,<sup>84</sup> who views Marxism as a by-product of the capitalist structure, and, as



such, its failure to overcome or transcend the class struggle was not surprising, but in fact to be expected.

In his account of Marxism, however, Lyotard does not adhere to a Sartrean critique of this philosophy. To a great extent Lyotard's critique would be critical of Sartre on this point, for it is necessarily post-Sartrean. For Sartre, Marxism was the philosophy of the day, i.e. in the 1960s when he was writing the *Critique of Dialectical Reason and Search for a Method*, whereas even in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Marxism (especially in France after 1968) proved to be incapable of leading individuals in society toward freedom. The failure of the French Communist Party to lead the students and workers into a real and effective struggle against the heavy handed bureaucracy of De Gaulle's government, left most intellectuals in France entirely disillusioned with Marxism and its capacity to challenge the status quo of capitalist bureaucracy. For these reasons, intellectuals in France left Marxism behind as simply a by-product of capitalism, and therewith its theory of liberation.<sup>85</sup>

Lyotard suggests that given the state of affairs in postmodern society, which he claims is changing in such a fashion that "the old poles of attraction represented by nation-states, parties, professions, institutions, and historical traditions are losing their attraction"<sup>86</sup> and may not be replaced, the new society will depend on "each individual's industriousness," and is "referred to himself."<sup>87</sup> However, Lyotard refuses to acknowledge this development as a fall into a type of social atomism, a view which he sees as being "haunted by the paradisaic representation of a lost 'organic' society."<sup>88</sup> On the contrary, for Lyotard although the *self* "does not amount to much," it nevertheless exists within a set of social relations that is both complex and mobile, and whose only means to knowledge, and therefore power, is dependent on the "messages that traverse and position him [i.e. the self] at the post of sender, addressee, or referent."<sup>89</sup> All types of mobility are dependent on these "language games effects."<sup>90</sup> For Lyotard, language games, in spite of their "vague" limits, may "even be solicited by regulatory mechanisms, and in particular by the self-adjustments the system undertakes in order to improve its performance."<sup>91</sup> This indicates that in spite of his rejection of Parsons' and Luhmann's *Systemstheorie*, Lyotard nevertheless maintains a view of society that is based on the idea of a 'system' that "can and must encourage such [language game] movement to the extent that it combats its own entropy."<sup>92</sup> Hence, what distinguishes his theory from the organic theory is the fact that language mobility has very vague limits, and is dependent on the narratives of individuals, or particular selves, rather than on

bureaucracy and socio-political organisation. In any case, the self in Lyotard's 'system' remains subject to the messages it receives and transmits, messages which originate from other individuals, or, in some cases, institutions. The self-regulation of the system indicates that there nevertheless remains a separation between the 'whole' and the 'individual' component, a distinction which renders Lyotard's rejection of both, the positivism of *systemtheorie* and the Marxism of critical theory, questionable. For what differs between Lyotard's position and theirs is Lyotard's emphasis on language and language games, an emphasis whose purpose, it will be argued, has much to do with Lyotard's definition of the elements which allow subjectivity and freedom to be actualised in contemporary society.

Lyotard's definition of subjectivity and freedom appears in the first instance in his criticism of the modern intellectual in France. When speaking of the intellectual and his or her right to represent public opinion, Lyotard echoes Foucault when stating that "for a long time, in the West, philosophers have been exposed to the temptation of the role of the intellectual, they have been tempted to turn themselves into the representatives of an authority. And there are not many, since Plato, over twenty-five hundred years, who have not succumbed to this temptation. It seems to me that Lyotard would like to belong to this minority; that's what he told me to tell you."<sup>93</sup> Lyotard's distinction between philosopher and intellectual resides in his belief that intellectuals are the active expression of the capitalist state, the legitimators of authority, the technocrats, physicians, engineers...etc., who "help their fellow citizens to believe in authority in matters where there isn't any, to legitimate this authority."<sup>94</sup> By contrast, a philosopher "refuses to appear before your eyes and ears as an authority, as he is asked to do."<sup>95</sup> This refusal signifies for Lyotard a social duty that is inherent in the philosopher's *raison d'être*. More importantly, it defines Lyotard's mission within a society whose entire organisation relies on the legitimisation of its authority. Although Lyotard's refusal to speak on behalf of others may seem to indicate that he finds it 'unethical' to do so, the very act of appearing with or without synchronisation of voice-image is itself an expression that is making a public statement, a statement which seeks to establish the difference between an 'intellectual' and a 'philosopher', which is a statement on behalf of both groups. In this sense, the statement not only appears self-negating, but also elitist, for it brings into full view the Platonist image of the 'Philosopher King,' unfolding the theory that only the philosopher is free from the 'illusions' spun out of the discourse of intellect and capitalist authority. It is this discourse of legitimisation that Lyotard finds oppressive in society, and with which he associates the lack of freedom which exists. Lyotard

suggests quite strongly that individuals in society should not be bound by contracts and agreements, but should be able to break free from these social inventions.<sup>96</sup> Unlike Plato in this respect, Lyotard does not conceive of his mission as a philosopher to uphold some form of the 'social good', but believes in an individualistic, almost anarchic expression of freedom in society, where individuals are able to consider only what they seek as legitimate. This is of course a negative freedom, one which acknowledges self-consciousness as no more than knowledge of the world, and is reminiscent of Sartre's in-itself.

These elements bring into focus the position that Lyotard accords to himself and his work, and it appears that with the failure of Marxism to stand in opposition to the established capitalist system -due to the absence of its labouring body whose function has now been altered and in its own post-industrial context has become part and parcel of the bourgeois structure and polemic- philosophy has to establish itself as a discipline that is capable of putting in question the legitimacy of the authority of the state and its bureaucratic machine. The question now remains: how is philosophy to succeed in its enterprise?

Lyotard answers this question by stating that philosophy has to discover means by which human freedom can be achieved through a liberation from the chains of 'capitalist illusions'. Freedom then is defined as a liberation from the idea that reason's capacity to give individuals the knowledge would necessarily give each of them the 'power' to be ruler of his/her universe. Capitalism's enslavement of the labour force, and Marxism's failure to advance consciousness of human solidarity among members of the labour force, announce in clear terms the failure of the Enlightenment project. Lyotard's alternative to all these 'metanarratives' consists in his belief that politics, or more specifically political institutions and the system concerned with power distribution, is itself part and parcel of the oppressive human condition. His position represents an attempt to learn from the lessons of the failure of modernity, that of stepping back -in terms of no longer believing that there is some 'absolute' solution that may be reached with respect to the postmodern condition- in order to better avoid the mistakes of the past, the mistaken hopes which vanished along with the May 1968 demonstrations and the Berlin Wall. Herein lies Lyotard's answers to our questions. Postmodernism remains, as modernity was, concerned with the actualisation of freedom in the world; its retracting of steps is exemplified in its incessant search among the philosophies of the past for answers that will help resolve the dilemmas of the present. Lyotard's disillusionment with both capitalism



and the Marxist concept of a united workers' consciousness, leads him to develop a theory of freedom in society that is based upon a specific form of existentialism, one which views subjectivity in terms of *individual* rather than collective creative expression through language, thereby rejecting *form* for *activity*. As such, Lyotard's theory reflects Sartre's pre-occupation with words as action, which is not embodied in an ever lasting phenomenal form, but is changing through both repetition and interpretation. Language is thereby the medium which allows expressions of subjectivity to appear in a variety of forms and structures; it is what comes closest to the definition of this eternally 'unrepresentable', or sublime, in the human essence.

### *Derrida's Différance: the Deconstruction of Language*

With Jacques Derrida we encounter postmodernism's polemic against the philosophical tradition since Hegel.<sup>97</sup> Derrida presents his case against modernity in the form of a rejection of philosophy, which aims to set it free, more specifically, 'to vomit it.' This is viewed in the sense of setting philosophy back in the general field in which it has always wanted to dominate, and from which it continually sought to extract itself, the domain of fiction and other writing practices.<sup>98</sup> Derrida wishes to 'behead' philosophy, to strip it of its claim to being the logic of all logics, the narrative of narratives, and the only way to do so would be to set it free in the 'sea of texts.'<sup>99</sup> This rejection of philosophy lies at the heart of Derrida's ideology which he calls 'the critique of logocentrism'. Derrida identifies the "history of humanity," or the history of the Western world as a 'phase', or a 'structure' representing the moment at which claims to universality in philosophy and science occurred, i.e. when the notion of Λογος became prevalent in writing. Derrida's rejection of philosophy appears as a complete revolt against not only Western philosophy in general, but more particularly what this philosophy rendered legitimate in terms of the socio-political and economic practices of the imperial West.

In his rejection of philosophy, Derrida has been considered as one whose work is best understood as a variant branch of hermeneutics, albeit constituting a more radical<sup>100</sup> position than other hermeneutics philosophers such as Paul Ricoeur and Hans-George Gadamer of whom he is often critical. Derrida's connection to hermeneutics is based upon the method he employs in rejecting the logocentric position of philosophy, i.e. through 'deconstruction' of language. Hermeneutics, as the philosophy of interpretation, does not claim to provide one objective truth, nor



does it reduce understanding to knowledge. Contrary to logocentric, Enlightenment philosophy of knowledge, hermeneutics assumes that understanding as such is itself one view of truth, and not the objective and absolute truth, and that in fact understanding is an interpretation of truth. Unlike Kantian epistemology which establishes itself as scientifically founded, and hence objective truth, hermeneutics sees knowledge as dependent on *contexts* of understanding. In its quest for knowledge, hermeneutics abandons the Enlightenment tradition's dependence on the scientific study of phenomenon and espouses interpretation of texts. There are limits within which hermeneutics succeeds in operating, and according to which it claims to avoid the charge of relativism while refusing to rely on 'fact of the matter' (i.e. empirical data) based truth claims.

Derrida uses hermeneutics to break away from logocentrism by removing emphasis from the 'privileged standpoint' of the speaker and directing it toward the interpretation of text, speech...etc.; in other words, he seeks to remove any 'special' authority the speaker has over the hearers. In his attempt to do so, Derrida's deconstruction of texts resembles to a great extent Lyotard's use of a desynchronised television message which meant to put emphasis on the nature of the message rather than the image of the speaker.<sup>101</sup> Both authors seek to deny another group of authors (for Lyotard the intellectual, for Derrida, the Enlightenment philosopher) authority claims, while maintaining for themselves an authoritative position: Lyotard speaks with the authority of the philosopher, and Derrida, that of the interpreter of philosophy. Where Lyotard's focus is on the dissociation between image and speech, i.e. between phenomenon and language, Derrida's is on linguistic structures. Derrida is critical of the Western tradition since Plato which he charges as having put emphasis on speech rather than the written text, arguing that it is only in the understanding of the structure of language that a given meaning may be established. Although critical of Saussure's linguistics, Derrida's conception of grammatology nevertheless incorporates "Peirce's notion that we think only in signs, and Saussure's view of the arbitrariness of the relation of the sign and what it signifies."<sup>102</sup>

Derrida's critique of modernity includes that of the idea stating that objective, scientifically based truth is derived from a close observation of phenomena in the here-and-now. He challenges the concept of *presence*, which is linked to the method of observation, and which provides an unmediated access to the 'thing-in-itself' in the here-and-now by putting emphasis on *reading* rather than *seeing*. He makes his point by using the term 'différance' which phonetically sounds like 'différence', but when

written with an *a*, *différance* means both to *differ*, and to *defer*. The term in itself seeks to indicate that speech is not adequate in conveying the true, or intended, meaning of the speaker, and that knowledge is dependent on context, therefore on diverse features of experience, both different, and deferred. Thus, a distinct and innovative knowledge of Plato's text may occur to one living in the twentieth century through a different method of interpretation, i.e. through deconstruction.

Yet deconstruction goes beyond the simple activity of 'reading', for it is concerned with an interpretation of a text which refers to other texts; it is concerned with what Bataille sought in the reading of Hegel, i.e. the *excess*, the transgression of the text's limits, the generation of an "intersecting and indefinitely expandable web called textuality."<sup>103</sup> In this sense, interpretations are therefore always timely, since they do not depend on immovable knowledge, but on the self-understanding of the interpreter, the time and discipline. In general, they are judged on the plausibility of the interpretation, the coherence of the assertions and the usefulness of the interpretation in terms of its capacity to answer timely problems. The past and the present are thereby blended into one moment of interpretation, a process which allows the shedding away (bracketing) of presently unneeded, useless or anachronistic understanding of ideas - for now, but not forever; this allows for the flexibility of admitting that one may forever rewrite one's understanding of both past and present, the present in the past and vice versa. Therefore, for Derrida, the present is never this moment that I speak, think or write, but always what it seems to me this text means, meant, or attempted to mean, and what this meaning changes for me, for my own *present Weltanschauung*. By taking away the immediate access to the notion of the present, Derrida poses a challenge to both positivism and phenomenology.

Derrida's position concerning the present challenges modernity's understanding of history and of knowledge on different levels. First, it succeeds in challenging the Kantian assumption that knowledge is cumulative and that humanity is invariably destined to be able, through the power of reason, ultimately to accede to perfection. Second, it succeeds in putting in question the centrality of knowledge, the assumption that there is only one answer, one truth, to every single question. Derrida shows in his reading of Plato's text that in fact there is at least one other reading that has been ignored, and that there may be others that no one is aware of. On the other hand, modernity's reading of history and its texts is also one form of reading, and so far is the earliest and most dominant, a fact that even Derrida's deconstruction cannot

deny. For the sake of non-circularity, what interests us here is the answer to the question concerning what constitutes the particular usefulness of the interpretations Derrida proposes, as opposed to countless others, to the resolution of the socio-political problems of today's society. It becomes rather unclear, when one is confronted with Derrida's textual deconstruction, what it is exactly that the author is driving at, for it remains uncertain whether the exercise is meant to demonstrate the author's ability to practice bracketing, or to reveal some heretofore undiscovered truth. Given hermeneutic's emphasis on understanding rather than knowledge, interpretation ultimately demands that interpreters be prepared to deal with socio-political and historical questions that are invariably posed within the framework of the present, and this because of hermeneutics' dependency on context. The question that ought to be asked, then, concerns what Derrida considers truth, as such, to be.

Derrida is often interpreted as denying the presence of truth, whereas it is most likely, as Hoy and Sarup suggest, that he is in fact trying to avoid making assertions as to the nature of truth. In *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles* Derrida states that "there is no such thing either as the truth of Nietzsche, or of Nietzsche's text... Indeed there is no such thing as a truth in itself. But only a surfeit of it. Even if it should be for me, about me, truth is plural."<sup>104</sup> If Derrida's attitude toward the search for truth and truth claims dismisses them as "trivial, and not the main issue for his concerns;"<sup>105</sup> it may equally indicate that what we read and interpret is never anybody else's truth, but our own, the product of our personal understanding, necessarily and ultimately unconcerned with the interpretation that others make of the same narrative, text, speech, ... etc. When this truth is my truth, unconcerned with the truth of others - and that's if they have any that may be related to mine - it also indicates that essentially I do not need, either physically or emotionally, to be subjected to the truths of others. In this case, Derrida's denial of the charge of relativism, and his emphasis that all interpretations are indeed in need of being read within a context, would indicate that in fact there *no longer is a socio-political context* within which individual interpreters need to take into account the interpretations of others; i.e. interpreters appear largely autonomous. In his account of truth and context Derrida appears, to a certain degree, in line with Sartre's definition of the truth for my for-itself. For Sartre as it is for Derrida, truth is what I make of this text that I read. It is my freedom expressed in and through the act of imagination. The author of the text has no say in what I, or my thought, make of the words written. I also need no transcendental socio-political context on which to base this imaginative act; on the contrary, I need to make complete abstraction from this context, from the



world of logocentrism and thingness, in order for my thought to be completely free. Seen from this existentialist viewpoint, Derrida's refusal to restrict interpretation to a socio-political context appears as thought's ultimate claim to freedom.

However, in view of Derrida's critical attitude toward Humanism which he deems as having straight-jacketed individuals into a lonely autonomy, and his agreement with Hegel that individuals are essentially socio-historical beings, this interpretation of Derrida's position seems, at first glance, questionable. Yet if one returns to the parallel made earlier with Lyotard, it may appear that *interpretation* is indeed separate from the life-world, or more specifically, as Rorty observes, interpretation (philosophy in general) is the preoccupation with a distinct reading of philosophy that is not the problem that the man on the street deals with or ponders, but of philosophers such as Rorty himself, Derrida and Heidegger.<sup>106</sup> Interpretation is therefore left to the expert, the philosopher, who appears on television to warn against the ideological bias of the intellectuals, and is also the one who takes it upon himself to express in philosophical language that philosophy is dead, and lays claim to the contemporary truth that there is no truth. Indeed, it would seem that it is Derrida's prevalent disregard for socio-political and historical context which led to Foucault's critique. Foucault is critical of Derrida's method insofar as it seems to blind "him [Derrida] to the fact that Plato's critique of writing is really about *truth* and not about the difference between writing and speech,"<sup>107</sup> as Derrida's deconstruction would have us believe. Hence, in his attempt to dissuade modernity from continuing along the Enlightenment tradition of rationality and its obsession with the *one* truth, Derrida seems to have run the risk of losing sight of the forest of context by only dealing with textually bracketed trees.

Derrida's answer to this objection by Foucault is decidedly anti-hermeneutical, or at least breaks away from the hermeneutical dependence on context. In *Limited Inc.*, Derrida asks: "Is there a rigorous and scientific concept of *context*? Or does the notion of context not conceal, behind a certain confusion, philosophical presuppositions of a very determinate nature?"<sup>108</sup> He then declares the intention to "try to demonstrate why a context is never absolutely determinable, or rather, why its determination can never be entirely certain or saturated."<sup>109</sup> Derrida makes his point by insisting that at each moment a sign, a word is written it, in this very moment, goes beyond the *real* context, which includes "a certain 'present' of the inscription, the presence of the writer to what he has written, the entire environment and the horizon of his experience, and above all the intention, the wanting-to-say-what-he-



means, which animates his inscription at a given moment."<sup>110</sup> At the very moment when a text is written, it inevitably breaks with its context, and is thereby "abandoned to its essential drift."<sup>111</sup> This break, or what Derrida calls rupture, occurs both in time and in space. By virtue of its essential iterability, "a written syntagma can always be detached from the chain in which it is inserted or given without causing it to lose all possibility of functioning, if not all possibility of 'communicating,' precisely."<sup>112</sup> The very spacing itself within the written text allows each iterable sign to be separated from its original chain, "from other elements of the internal contextual chain," as well as from its reference to a present "whether past or future in the modified form of the present that is past or to come."<sup>113</sup>

It is in terms of this complete rejection of the traditional conception of context that Derrida equally breaks free from existential humanism's earlier definition of subjectivity as establishing its 'existence' through the written text. For Derrida, as the author of any work, my writing can never establish me as a subject, at least not the subject I wanted to establish, in my interpreter's reading of my text. Subjectivity, the very act of creation, is thereby annulled, or more specifically disempowered, for it cannot convey my subjectivity, the meaning of my life that I have put down in narrative, to others. However, this distinction is directly negated by the very absence of a socio-political context for interpretation that Derrida adheres to. If my text is altered once it is interpreted according to others whose interpretations do not truly affect, or have any truth claim on my own interpretation, then what would allow anything to stop me from acknowledging my subjectivity according to my own written text? Hence, interpretation taking place outside a given context continues to run the risk of being interpreted, rather against its will or its author's will, according to the humanist interpretation of subjectivity. This conclusion, however, does not pretend to claim that Derrida's aim is to agree with humanism on this point, but merely to point out that his rejection of limits leave his theory prey to interpretations which ultimately bring about its own self-negation.

However, unlike what his critics claim, Derrida does indeed write within a context, and it is the context of modernity. It would be erroneous to claim that Derrida's work shirks its socio-political responsibility, for he invariably addresses questions which are central to the modern philosophical debate, i.e. those concerned with subjectivity, and self-consciousness. What interests us here is his critique of Hegel, more precisely, Hegel's concept of *Aufhebung* to which he contrasts *différance*. It is in *différance* that Derrida seeks to break with the Hegelian

logocentric and presence-bound aspect of the theory of *becoming*. Derrida is especially critical of Hegelian 'dialectics', which he considers as the very system which maintained and brought to modernity the logocentric idea of metaphysics through its use of binary opposites. However, before entering into a discussion of *Aufhebung* and *différance*, a few words are needed to explain Derrida's definition of metaphysics, binary opposition and their relations to writing.

Derrida is critical of metaphysics which he defines as 'being-for-presence,' for several reasons. First, metaphysical systems of thought are logocentric, i.e. they depend on a *logos*, a unitary foundation, an essence of our present beliefs; in this sense, it also indicates a longing for, or a dependency on, truth emanating from a 'transcendental signifier'. Derrida's critique of logocentrism is metaphorically expressed in *Feu la cendre*,<sup>114</sup> which consists of a contemplation of the diverse meanings of one specific sentence: *il y a là cendre* [there exists *there* ashes]. Among the multiplicity of meanings of this sentence, there appears over and over again two particular interpretations: otherness and finitude. In *là/there* lies otherness, and in the ashes lies the *other*, the negation, of any existing being. As such, the sentence comes to mean: there lies the ashes of ... . Here, *otherness* signifies what is no more, which is unknown, and which terrifies in its absence. Yet in the same sentence there is certitude; the verb 'exists' pertains to certainty of the presence of negation, or absence. The sentence itself expresses the certainty of non-certainty, the presence of absence, the negation of negation. As such, this sentence expresses in logocentric fashion the use of binary oppositions. These include: signifier/signified, sensible/intelligible, speech/writing, diachrony/synchrony, space/time, passivity/activity. Derrida is critical both of structuralists and phenomenologists for not putting these oppositions in question, for not putting them under 'erasure'.<sup>115</sup>

A second reason for Derrida's attack on metaphysics is concerned with what he calls phonocentrism, i.e. the argument which holds that speech is the immediate and hierarchically superior form of expression of consciousness and knowledge, whereas writing is taken to be an inferior form of speech, or second to it. Derrida believes that oppositions between intelligible and sensible, soul and body, have been inherited by modern linguistics in the form of the opposition between meaning and word, or more specifically in this context, speech and writing. Derrida is critical of Saussure's contention that linguistics should be a study of speech alone rather than of speech *and* writing. This is a contention that is shared by Jakobson, Lévi-Strauss and most semiological structuralists. Derrida believes that behind this bias there

exists a particular view of human beings which assumes that they can express themselves and "that they can use language as if it were a transparent medium for an inner truth about their being."<sup>116</sup> It is not Derrida's aim to discount the importance of speech, but to point out that speech, in so far as it is spontaneous, may indeed be a second-hand form of writing, as writing was considered second to speech.

The third reason for Derrida's criticism of metaphysics has to do with the nature of binary opposites that are central to logocentric systems of thought. As ideologies, binary oppositions draw sharp distinctions between conceptual opposites, thereby making alternative conceptions harder to identify. Adherence to distinctions such as truth and falsity, meaning and nonsense, centre and periphery make alternative thinking difficult. Derrida, in *différance*, suggests a method which allows the breaking down of the oppositions by which we are accustomed to think and which ensure the survival of metaphysics in our thinking: matter/spirit, subject/object, veil/truth, body/soul, text/meaning, interior/exterior, representation/presence, appearance/essence, etc. *Différance* implies that such oppositions can be deconstructed in such a way as to show that one term relies and inheres within the other. This is exemplified in Derrida's commentary on Freud's paper "Das Unheimliche." The *un* in *unheimlich* presents itself as the opposite of *heimlich*; whereas Freud recognises that far from being opposed to it, *unheimlich* "can mean both that which is homely, familiar and within our ken and, on the other hand, that which is hidden, dangerous, uncanny, and unconscious."<sup>117</sup>

What becomes clear in Derrida's critique of logocentrism in the context of writing is the presence of a need to consider the unconscious in language. Derrida refuses to accept Saussure's contention that in language, the signifier is directly related to the signified. There is no arbitrary one-to-one correspondence between them. On the contrary, he sees "the sign as a structure of difference: half of it is always 'not there' and the other half is always 'not that'."<sup>118</sup> Signifier and signified operate in such a way as to include a third dimension, one that is not considered in the Saussurean model, but which resembles to a certain extent Lacan's idea of the real, which lies beyond language. For Derrida, this realm lies in our unconscious in such a way that it expresses itself inadvertently in our choice of words; we choose words which express not only the 'meaning in context' but also their opposite, such as he demonstrated in Freud's *unheimlich*, and Plato's *Pharmakon*. This third dimension, if we may call it thus, is expressed in Derrida's fascination with *excess*, or *transgression* of the text, and which he sees as expressing an interpretation of the text



that may have escaped even its author, in other words of what the author may have thought but was unaware of himself or herself thinking it, but which has become clearer for the reader in a *different* place and *deferred* time. On this account Terry Eagleton explains: "Nothing is ever fully present in signs. It is an illusion for me to believe that I can ever be fully present to you in what I say or write, because to use signs at all entails my meaning being always somehow dispersed, divided and never quite at one with itself. Not only my meaning, indeed, but I myself: since language is something I made out of, rather than a convenient tool I use, the whole idea that I am a stable, unified entity must also be a fiction."<sup>119</sup> In effect, Derrida's 'third dimension' is comparable to Sartre's idea of the imaginative act on several counts. First, in the concept of erasure, the double meaning within a word such as *unheimlich* operates at one and the same time as identification and negation. It is an expression of the second stage of the 'imaginative act' in Sartre's triad, i.e. isolation of a given concept so as to allow it to be suspended between imaginative thought and the phenomenal. In Derrida's *différance* this occurs in the process of reading a text from which the socio-political context is abstracted, when a different meaning appears, the text of the writer is then seen in a third dimension: it is identified and isolated. Freed from logocentrism, texts are then read with the intention of liberating the reader (and in a certain manner, the writer), which occurs when being and consciousness (context and thought) are made distinct.

With this purpose in mind, what Derrida seeks to do in deconstruction is in fact quite opposite to Hegel's dialectics; for where Hegel seeks to establish the moment of 'becoming' or 'synthesis' between two binary opposites, Derrida "stresses the irreducibility of metaphor, the difference at play within the very constitution of literal meaning."<sup>120</sup> In effect, Derrida seeks to hold in all consciousness the diversity, opposition, and ambivalence between meaning and the author's assertions. He seeks to show that our use of metaphors is often the underlying message that we seek to express, but that it is itself thwarted, redirected, according to the logic we use, a freedom which can only occur through a distinct separation between context and thought. He is hostile to Hegel's dialectics, the application of which signifies the continued oppression of the individual meaning in and through socio-political institutions; therein lies the *unfreedom* of the Hegelian system, for *consciousness* becomes limited by *being*. In his use of *différance*, Derrida seeks to 'erase' all oppositions, undoing yet preserving them. According to Eagleton, "deconstruction disarticulates traditional conceptions of the author and the work and undermines conventional notions of reading and history. Instead of



mimetic, expressive and didactic theories of 'literature' it offers textuality (*écriture*). It kills the author, turns history and tradition into intertextuality and celebrates the reader."<sup>121</sup> According to his critics, Derrida appear to be making of the reader the master of the text. His/Her interpretation signifies what is true. Thought needs to take into account what justifies its interpretation of a text, but must hold fast to its purpose, i.e. to dissociate its own reading from the author's logocentric context.

The question raised by many commentators and critics is concerned with what this method of deconstruction may be responsible for, particularly in terms of the identity of the self. Deconstruction seems to threaten the modern (Enlightenment) view of self-identity as unified and stable consciousness by celebrating "dissemination over truth, explosion and fragmentation over unity and coherence, undecidable spaces over prudent closures, playfulness and hysteria over care and rationality."<sup>122</sup> As Sarup states, deconstruction suggests that "the reader, like the text, is unstable. With deconstruction the categories 'criticism', 'philosophy' and 'literature' collapse, borders are overrun,"<sup>123</sup> thereby discarding any type of sense certainty. The only alternative to this state of affairs is a necessary return to context, from which Derrida sought to extricate deconstruction. For Eagleton, "meaning may well be ultimately undecidable if we view language contemplatively, as a chain of signifiers on a page; it becomes 'decidable' and words like 'truth', 'reality', 'knowledge', and 'certainty' have something of their force restored to them when we think of language rather as something we *do*, as indissociably interwoven with our practical forms of life."<sup>124</sup> Thus, it appears as if for Derrida the constitution of the self, as it is for Foucault, lies in the personal interpreter's capacity to interpret and comprehend a given text, in a given epoch. Nevertheless the author's text influences interpretation; it does so in the third dimension, i.e. in a manner that the author was not personally aware, but has done so unconsciously in the choice of words. For language is itself an expression of our essence, it is what we *do*, i.e. it is what defines who we are and who we believe ourselves to be. Subjectivity, unlike that of existentialist humanism, is therefore not simply that of writing, but also of reading. Yet in many ways, this position which seems to overrun Sartre's assertion that I am what I have written, in fact remains one with it, for I am the interpretation of the text that I have written; I am the product of a *différend*, '*sous rature*', erased yet preserved nevertheless. I the writer can only identify my identity, interpret my subjectivity, once I have put the final bracket in my personal biography. Therefore, I can only define my subjectivity at the end of my life, because at every moment I seek to read what I have written I am likely to find a *différand* in the interpretation of my identity.

With Eagleton's suggestion we return to seek in Derrida's *différance* signs of *action*, or, more specifically and in Hegelian terms, of actualisation. Unlike the process of *Aufhebung*, which Hegel defines as the unity of both what 'transcends' and what is 'transcended', hence a unity of action and passivity, *différance* does not proceed toward a synthesis of opposites, but insists, as explained earlier in terms of deconstruction, on keeping the opposing meanings under 'erasure', in juxtaposition. Implied in the process of *Aufhebung* is also the *moment* of 'becoming', or more precisely the accomplishment of 'Determinate Being'. In Determinate Being there lies the germ of identity in difference, that is, the coming into consciousness of the *I* as the unity of the *I* and *not-I*. For Hegel, the stability of this identity depends on its acceptance and happy co-existence, rather than its struggle, with its other, the *not-I*. Here, Identity does not exclude, but on the contrary presupposes that its negation be present in its self-identity. On this Hegel states: "Thus Being-in-Self is, first, negative relation to non-existence; otherness is external to and opposed to it; so far as Something is in itself it is removed beyond the sphere of otherness and of Being-for-Other. But, secondly, it also has Not-being in itself, since it is itself the Not-being of Being-for-Other."<sup>125</sup>

In comparison with Hegel's *Aufhebung*, *différance* ultimately stands in metaphorically defined bi-polarity. This demands that opposite meanings remain in check thereby refusing to take the final step toward *Aufhebung*. In fact, it is not the object of *différance* to guide us toward synthesis, nor any type of actualisation, for it is there to point out diffusion, alternatives, hidden unconscious meanings, and not to point to any one particular answer. Derrida defines *différance* as both strategic and adventurous. "Strategic because no transcendent truth present outside the field of writing can govern theologically the totality of the field. Adventurous because this strategy is not a simple strategy in the sense that strategy orients tactics according to a final goal, a *telos* or theme of development of the field."<sup>126</sup> He justifies the *telosless* or aimless dialectic of *différance* by the fact that empirical study is itself aimless and has proven itself to be in "opposition to philosophical responsibility,"<sup>127</sup> and that "if there is a certain wandering in the tracing of *différance*, it no more follows the lines of philosophical-logical discourse than that of its symmetrical and integral inverse, empirical-logical discourse."<sup>128</sup> Moreover, in the absence of a centre lies the reason for which anything is possible, and therefore, "the concept of *play* keeps itself beyond this [empirical-logical] opposition, announcing, on the eve of philosophy and beyond it, the unity of chance and necessity in calculations without end."<sup>129</sup>

In reading Hegel, and more specifically Bataille's reading of Hegel's Master/Slave dialectic, Derrida points out the limitations of the Hegelian dialectic in terms of Hegel's conscious effort to restrict the economy of his own choice of meanings, which eventually permits only one unique interpretation of the dialectic and its outcome. Whereas Bataille, in reading into the metaphor of Master/Slave -what Hegel calls<sup>130</sup>- 'real' consequences, proposes a different outcome while keeping with the Hegelian *Aufhebung*. This 'real' reading of Bataille interprets the Master/Slave dialectic in terms of a 'real', 'lived' struggle for life and death, which however does not lose the metaphorical dimension concerning the coming into being of self-consciousness intended by Hegel. The *excess* that Bataille points out in the Hegelian text is expressed in the distinction Bataille makes between lordship and sovereignty. Unlike lordship,<sup>131</sup> the meaning of which is restricted to "the putting at stake of life," which is "a moment in the constitution of meaning, in the presentation of essence and truth,"<sup>132</sup> sovereignty implies also mastery. However, mastery is specifically the domain of the slave who is not officially master, but is so in practice. This denotes the ambiguous and already dialectical moment borne out of the words in the text defining the Master/Slave dialectic. The excess of the text becomes clear when, in lordship only one aspect is defined, that of 'putting one's life at stake', whereas in sovereignty there is already implied the consequence of this act, i.e. its *différend*. For Derrida, Hegel's *Aufhebung* as the "economy of life restricts itself to conservation, to circulation and self-reproduction as the reproduction of meaning," leads to the situation where "everything covered by the name lordship collapses into comedy;" and this occurs because "the independence of self-consciousness becomes laughable at the moment when it liberates itself by enslaving itself, when it starts to *work*, that is, when it enters into dialectics."<sup>133</sup>

For Derrida what exceeds dialectics is the absurd, the comic: "laughter alone exceeds dialectics and the dialectician: it bursts out only on the basis of an absolute renunciation of meaning, an absolute risking of death, what Hegel calls abstract negativity. A negativity that never takes place, that never *presents* itself, because in doing so it would start to work again. A laughter that literally never *appears*, because it exceeds phenomenality in general, the absolute possibility of meaning."<sup>134</sup> It is laughable because it expresses "the anguish experienced when confronted by expenditure on lost funds, by the absolute sacrifice of meaning: a sacrifice without returns and without reserves."<sup>135</sup> Derrida finds the notion of *Aufhebung* tragicomical because "it signifies the *busying* of a discourse losing its breath as it



reappropriates all negativity for itself, as it works the "putting at stake" into an *investment*, as it *amortizes* absolute expenditure; and as it gives meaning to death, thereby simultaneously blinding itself to the baselessness of the nonmeaning from which the basis of meaning is drawn, and in which this basis of meaning is exhausted."<sup>136</sup> This indicates that Derrida follows Kojève and Sartre's interpretation of Hegelian/Marxist dialectics, expressed in the idea that the subjectivity of the slave can only come about through the slave's capacity to view his/her own worth in terms of a product, a thingness. It does not read this as a metaphor, and ignores later assertions made by both Hegel and Marx, indicating that self-consciousness is not necessarily what is produced in and through objects, but lies primarily in the activity itself.

In taking up the notion of sovereignty instead of lordship, Bataille and Derrida attempt to break, through the use of dialectical method, the continuity of dialectics. Laughter is directed toward the "non-sense" that the use of sovereignty imparts to the Master/Slave dialectic. It is non-sense on two grounds. First, because it is evident that the logocentric history of philosophy seeks to show us that work is "the meaning of meaning, and *techne* as the unfolding of truth."<sup>137</sup> Second, because the binary opposition of being/nothing used by Hegel as the basis for the struggle for life and death, the wrenching of meaning from non-meaning, the meaning of life from death, may be off-set by the idea of sacrifice. Moreover, one need not enter into a struggle for life and death to understand what death is, for as Bataille states, "the death of the other is always the image of one's own death,"<sup>138</sup> and hence it suffices for us to witness death in order for us to experience the fear and anxiety associated with it. In this case the reality of the struggle, its actuality and posited necessity, lose all significance, and according to Derrida and Bataille unveil the limited, 'restricted', extent of Hegelian *Aufhebung*. For Derrida, Hegel's phenomenology -indeed phenomenology in general- "corresponds to a restricted economy: restricted to commercial values, one might say, picking up on the terms of the definition, a 'science dealing with the utilization of wealth,' limited to the meaning and the established value of objects, and to their *circulation*. The *circularity* of absolute knowledge could dominate, could comprehend only this circulation, only the *circuit of reproductive consumption*."<sup>139</sup> Whereas, what Bataille and Derrida in their quest for a "general economy" seek to achieve is "the absolute production and destruction of value," the exceeding energy as such, the energy which "can only be lost without the slightest aim, consequently without any meaning."<sup>140</sup>



It is necessary to make some preliminary points concerning this reading of Hegel, and the Master/Slave dialectic. Indeed, it is necessary to return to Foucault's critique of Derrida and deconstruction, for in this sense interpretation seeks -almost maliciously- to tease the established dialectic in this arbitrary misreading, thereby diverting the attention from the text which deals with consciousness toward a play on metaphor, the ambiguity of which was established in translation. Both Bataille and Derrida seem to enjoy playing on the metaphor of the Master/lord, but seem to ignore the other metaphor Slave/bondsman,<sup>141</sup> in which case the bondsman is not arbitrarily forced into slavery, but has consciously defined his position; as such the laughter would undoubtedly cease as the act of entering into bondage is made through an expression of individual will, one that is conscious of its fear of death, i.e. fear of a "negation without independence, which thus remains without the required significance of recognition."<sup>142</sup> For Hegel, death is also metaphorical, it signifies the "natural negation of consciousness,"<sup>143</sup> for consciousness is inherently present in life as a natural and necessary phenomenon, the absolute negation of which must be death even if this be in life. Yet both Bataille and Derrida seem to choose which metaphor to [bracket] while treating the rest of the text in terms of 'reality'. This is of course done in the service of pointing out some inherently logocentric, in Hegel's case more restricted, aspects of dialectics, and to establish an *other* to dialectics, a *différend*, one that is not its extreme opposite, for otherwise *différance* will have to lapse into dialectics anew, but that is itself different and deferred, more precisely, one that is able to discover its limits and go beyond them; but to what end? How is the discovery of a *différend* to dialectics particularly beneficial in resolving the problems arising from logocentrism; in other words, how is this challenge to Hegel's dialectics instrumental in providing a solution for the stunted subjectivity and unfreedom experienced in contemporary society?

Although *différance* 'solicits'<sup>144</sup> the determination of beings and Being, it is not an entity unto itself, and it "governs nothing, reigns over nothing, and nowhere exercises any authority."<sup>145</sup> In its activity, *différance* seeks to subvert the need for any centre, and "kingdom," and in so doing it posits itself as "the historical and epochal *unfolding* of Being or of the ontological difference. The *a* of *différance* marks the *movement* of this unfolding,"<sup>146</sup> because it signifies the difference, i.e. the dialectical nature of Signification. *Différance* thus appears as the ultimate negation, the difference and deferred moment of identification, and more specifically self-identification. In terms of action, unlike the Hegelian *Aufhebung*, *différance* does not consider the moment of synthesis or any form of actuality, for its presence is

restricted to interpretation and thought, and because of its deferral it is not even a moment that may find in speech a context according to which its activity, as actuality, may be defined in socio-political terms. Derrida categorically refuses to bestow a name on *différance*, for he sees it as the liberation of human thought from the chains of metaphysical language and its ordering of the universe; in this context, it is the freedom expressed in the self's identification of itself and its own subjectivity without a reference to a metaphysical *Other*. For Derrida, the postmodern self will seek to forego the centre "without *nostalgia*, that is, outside of the myth of a purely maternal or paternal language, a lost native country of thought."<sup>147</sup> *Différance* is the activity, the concept, the recognition of which *affirms*, "in the sense in which Nietzsche puts affirmation into play, in a certain laughter and a certain step of the dance."<sup>148</sup> Derrida concludes that "the alliance of speech and Being in the unique word, in the finally proper name ... is inscribed in the simulated affirmation of *différance*."<sup>149</sup> Our existence outwith the centre remains a certainty because "Being/ speaks/ always and everywhere/ throughout/ language."<sup>150</sup>

However, the expression of subjectivity does not necessarily indicate who, or what this subjectivity is, because for Derrida the very necessity of centring our thinking on the idea of 'man' is itself logocentric and should be renounced. He recognises that "what is difficult to think today is an end of man which would not be a teleology in the first person plural."<sup>151</sup> For "the *we*, which articulates natural and philosophical consciousness with each other in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, assures the proximity to itself of the fixed and central being for which this circular reappropriation is produced."<sup>152</sup> Here Derrida expresses his essential opposition to Hegel's dialectics, and indeed to all phenomenology, for in their preoccupation with the 'telos of man' they express a predominantly Humanist idea: "The *we* is the unity of absolute knowledge and anthropology, of God and man, of onto-theo-teleology and humanism."<sup>153</sup> Standing between this classical phenomenology and Heidegger's, Derrida appears to side with Nietzsche whose proposal for a "change of terrain" is "a change of 'style'", and this style "must be *plural*."<sup>154</sup> What this change of style means for the new "man" Derrida writes of only in metaphor,<sup>155</sup> suggesting that there are at least "two ends of man," each of which is a *différend* to the other.

Derrida recognises that "in the last analysis my opening is not justifiable, since it is only on the basis of *différance* and its "history" that we can allegedly know who and where "we" are, and what the limits of an "era" might be."<sup>156</sup> This exemplifies the manner in which Derrida treats history and its importance. Lyotard's

'incredulity toward metanarratives' is expressed in Derrida's work in terms of the incredulity toward the necessity for one Hegelian account of history, rather than a history of each component, each entity. Derrida recognises the need to define the history of *différance*, rather than history in general, but adds that this history will help us understand who and where *we* are. This implies a history of the use of language as means toward the actualisation of subjectivity in society, and therewith human freedom. However, how is this history of *différance* in any way not a metanarrative? Derrida's answer lies in his categorical refusal to attribute a name to *différance*, for "*différance* is not."<sup>157</sup> Since *différance* is none other than an underlying function of the process of actualisation, it remains imbedded in *freeplay*, and thereby unnameable and decentred.

Insofar as *différance* operates primarily through the medium of language and interpretation, it appears limited in character. Although Derrida seems specifically interested in what reflects the knowledge of subjectivity, its actualisation, it is nevertheless limited to thought rather than action. If subjectivity is limited to the realm of language and consciousness, it will do little to alter the world it lives in, a condition which will eventually prove self-defeating and deceptive. Although not the divine nature intended for subjectivity in the definition given to it by the Romantics, or even the Humanists, it nevertheless needs to operate in the world, and this not merely according to simple consciousness, but also in *deed*. It cannot simply think itself into subjectiveness without the actualisation of this subjectivity. In this sense, *différance* may resolve the problem of consciousness, but what of action? Implied in *différance* is the notion that once consciousness is achieved action will follow, but there are no arbitrary connections, no explicit formulae to ascertain that such action would certainly ensue. And what of its nature: how is it constructed, perceived? The limitation of the recognition of subjectivity in and through *différance* cannot be expected of the population of a whole society; its presence, at least in the first instance, is limited to the nature of intellectual activity in which each intellectual may, through the interpretation of the written word, become conscious of his/her subjectivity. With Derrida one is faced with yet another intellectually limited essence of subjectivity in which only intellectuals have the capacity to fully comprehend human nature, albeit according to their own personal interpretation, and its activity as subjectivity in the world. The preoccupation with the actualisation of subjectivity through language harks back to the notion of 'creation', more precisely self-creation (for the *other* is always there for *me*), and therewith remains within the confines of the centredness it sought to annihilate. In this sense, *différance* appears as a

reworking of a version of Sartre's being-for-itself. In its capacity to point to the other while effectively negating/nihilating its essence, *différance* is consciousness that refuses to be the slave of any context, any thingness; as such, it appears as pure, free thought. Pure, in so far as it rejects all that has gone before it in terms of knowledge; and free as it never has to succumb to the influence of past logocentric contexts, and more so, because it no longer has to suffer Derrida's interpretation of Hegel's notion of 'becoming', i.e. the affirmation of thought as self-consciousness through labour and production. *Différance* is the power of thought set free from the phenomenal world. It is the actualisation of Plato's world of *Idea* in contemporary thought.



## Notes

- <sup>1</sup>Michel Foucault, "Orders of Discourse," *Social Science Information*, no. 10, (1971).
- <sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 30.
- <sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 28-29, my italics.
- <sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 28.
- <sup>5</sup>M. Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and other Writings 1977-1984*, trans. Alan Sheridan and others, Lawrence D. Dritzman (ed.), (New York & London: Routledge, 1988), p. 29.
- <sup>6</sup>M. Foucault, "Qu'est-ce-que les lumières?", in *Magazine Littéraire*, (Paris: mai, 1984), p. 35-39.
- <sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 39, (henceforth, all translations from the french texts are my own).
- <sup>8</sup>Jürgen Habermas, *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, David C. Hoy (ed.), (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 103-108.
- <sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 104.
- <sup>10</sup>Foucault did not formulate this aspect of his theory before *Power/Knowledge* where he states: "When I think back now, I ask myself what else it was that I was talking about, in *Madness and Civilization* or *The Birth of the Clinic*, if not Power? Yet I am perfectly aware that I scarcely ever used the word and never had such a field of analyses at my disposal then". M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, Kate Soper, (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1980), p. 115.
- <sup>11</sup>Cf. M. Foucault, "A Preface to Transgression," *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, D. F. Bouchard (ed.), trans. D.F. Bouchard & Sherry Simon, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977), pp. 29-52. On this Foucault states: "In a language stripped of dialectics, at the heart of what it says but also at the root of its possibilities, the philosopher is aware that "we are not everything;" he learns as well that even the philosopher does not inhabit the whole of his language like a secret and perfectly fluent god. Next to himself he discovers the existence of another language that also speaks and that he is unable to dominate, one that strives, fails, and falls silent and that he cannot manipulate, the language he spoke at one time and that has now separated itself from him, now gravitating in a space increasingly silent." *Ibid.*, p. 41-42.
- <sup>12</sup>Cf. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, the article on Michel Foucault.
- <sup>13</sup>M. Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, (New York: Pantheon, 1972), p. 12.
- <sup>14</sup>M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, (New York: Pantheon, 1977), p. 31.
- <sup>15</sup>Mark Poster, *Foucault, Marxism and History*, (Cambridge: Polity, 1984), p. 85.
- <sup>16</sup>Cf. W.T. Stace, *The Philosophy of Hegel*, (New York: Dover Pub., 1955), his commentary on the nodal point.
- <sup>17</sup>M. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, (London: Pantheon, 1970), pp. 219-220.
- <sup>18</sup>Alan Sheridan, *Michel Foucault*, (London: Tavistock, 1980), p. 55.
- <sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>20</sup>M. Foucault, *Order of Things*, op. cit., p. 79.
- <sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 79.
- <sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 289.
- <sup>23</sup>M. Foucault, "Intellectuals and Power," *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, op. cit., p. 207.
- <sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 207-208.
- <sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 208.
- <sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, italics added for emphasis.
- <sup>27</sup>M. Foucault, "A Preface to Transgression," op. cit., p. 37.
- <sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 40.

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- 31Ibid.
- 32Ibid., p. 42.
- 33M. Foucault, "The Masked Philosopher," *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, op.cit., p. 329.
- Italics added.
- 34M. Foucault, "What is an Author?," *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, op. cit., p. 132.
- 35*Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, op. cit., p. 5.
- 36A Masked Philosopher, op. cit., p. 326-327.
- 37Ibid., p. 325.
- 38Richard Rorty, *Essays on Heidegger and Others*, (Cambridge U.P., 1991), pp. 193-198.
- 39Michel Foucault, "After Word: The Subject and Power", appeared in Dreyfus and Rabinow, *Michel Foucault*, 1982, pp. 208-226.
- 40Foucault, *Order of Things*, op. cit., pp. 342-43.
- 41Sheridan, op. cit., p. 84.
- 42Foucault, "Subject and Power", op. cit., p. 208.
- 43Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, ...*, op. cit., p. 162-63.
- 44Foucault, "Subject and Power", op. cit, p. 216.
- 45Michel Foucault, *Le souci de soi*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), pp. 84-85.
- 46Mark Poster, *Foucault, Marxism and History*, op. cit., p. 2.
- 47Georges Ranlet, 'Interview with Michel Foucault', *Telos*, no. 55 (Spring, 1983), p. 209; cited in Poster, *ibid.*, pp. 2-3.
- 48Poster added that "Foucault's reference here is clearly to Sartre, Francis Jeanson and *Les Temps modernes*, which was a center for opposition to the Algerian War at a time when the French Communist Party supported it. Foucault now sees himself as an heir to the existential marxists who developed their leftist critique outside the CP." Ibid.
- 49Poster, *ibid.*, p. 3.
- 50Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).
- 51Ibid., p. xxiii.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53Ibid.
- 54Ibid.
- 55Ibid., p. xxiv.
- 56Ibid.
- 57Jean-François Lyotard, "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?", *Postmodernism*, Thomas Docherty (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 44.
- 58Ibid., p. 46.
- 59Ibid.
- 60Ibid.
- 61*Postmodern Condition*, op. cit., p. 81.
- 62Ibid., p. 77.
- 63Ibid., p. 78, my italics.
- 64Ibid., p. 81, my italics.
- 65Ibid., pp. 60-67.
- 66Ibid., p. xxiv.
- 67Ibid.
- 68Ibid., p. 61.
- 69Ibid., p. 62.
- 70Ibid.

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. xxiv.

<sup>72</sup>J.F.Lyotard, *Political Writings*, "The Wall, the Gulf and the Sun," trans. Bill Readings & Kevin P. Geiman, (London: UCL Press, 1993) pp. 112-123.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 114. Also in the *Postmodern Condition*, op. cit., pp. 12-13.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., "The Différend," p. 10.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>*Postmodern Condition*, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>"Man is rendered incoherent by the coherence of his structural projection," says Baudrillard. In essence, Baudrillard proposes a type of phenomenology of structuralism itself, in the form of the social world already analysed structurally. This allows him to dissect in minute detail the subterranean play of reification as an objective system in which people are to some extent already integrated in their activities and at the level of everyday life: "The code of political economy (both commodity form *and* sign form) does not operate by alienating consciousness from contents. A parallel confusion arises in the view of primitive myths [where] the pregnant effect of mythic 'contents' are held to bind society together (through the cohesion of 'belief' systems). But actually these myths make up a code of signs that exchange among themselves, integrating the group through the very process of their circulation. Likewise, the code of political economy rationalises and regulates exchange, makes things communicate, but under the law of the code and through the control of meaning. The division of labour, the functional division of the terms of discourse, do not 'mystify' people, they socialise them and inform their exchange according to a general, abstract model. The very concept of the individual is the product of this general system of exchange...And ideology, in its version as a superstructure of contents and consciousness is, in these terms, itself an alienated concept." J. Baudrillard, *Le Système des objets* (Paris: Denöel-Gonthier, 1968), pp. 69, 147.

<sup>85</sup>Nevertheless, Sartre's influence on intellectuals reading Marx can still be found in postmodern writing such as that of Jean Baudrillard who suggests that Marx defines subjectivity as the actualisation of the individual's labour embodied in the product, and claims that the disappearance of the subject in contemporary society occurs due to the appearance of a new form of economic labour, that of white-collar work, which does not allow this form of subjectivity to take place, i.e. that pushing-paper does not allow the worker to see his/her own subjectivity in the final product. This definition of subjectivity according to Marx embodies the fetishist/materialist critique that Sartre directed toward Marxist theory of subjectivity.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., "A Podium without a Podium: Television according to J.-F. Lyotard," pp. 90-95; p. 95.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>*Postmodern Condition*, op. cit., p. 45.

<sup>97</sup>In fact, Derrida's analysis starts with Plato; in the essay 'Plato's Pharmacy' Derrida criticises the separation between philosophy and poetry at its origins, i.e. in the analysis of the use of the word *pharmakon* in Plato's writing. This single word can be translated in either of two ways, as 'cure' or as 'poison', and, like a drug, which way it is taken will make all the difference in the world. Derrida seeks to emphasise that just as the hemlock, which can also be used as a drug, given to Socrates with the intention of poisoning him, Socrates also uses both rhetoric and metaphysics to prove that by taking the hemlock he is really being cured. Words for Derrida have a similar 'narcotic' effect which leads us to take reality as a dream, or dreams as reality, and charges that philosophy has so far lost sight of the difference. Cf. Derrida, *Dessimination*, trans. B. Johnson, (Chicago, 1981). For our present purposes, I mention Hegel as the representative for the modern tradition, or the Enlightenment tradition, with which Derrida is truly concerned.

<sup>98</sup>Catherine Clément, "Jacques Derrida", *L'Arc*, Revue Trimestrielle, no. 54, p. 16. "Ce qui intéresse Jacques Derrida, dans le rapport complexe qu'il entretient avec la philosophie, c'est de la rejeter, comme il le dit lui-même, de la rendre, de la vomir. Vomir la philosophie, c'est la remettre dans ce champ général qu'elle a toujours voulu dominer et dont elle a toujours voulu s'extraire: c'est confronter à la fiction, à d'autres pratiques d'écriture." My translation.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., "Elle a toujours voulu, la philosophie, être la logique des logiques, le discours des discours: la *décapiter*, c'est lui ôter la représentation de son privilège capital. Il faut, dit-il, la rendre à la mer des textes, comme Jonas craché par la baleine."

<sup>100</sup>Cf. David Hoy's, 'Jacques Derrida', *The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences*, op. cit., p. 50-53.

<sup>101</sup>Lyotard, *Political Writings*, op.cit., p. 104-106.

<sup>102</sup>Hoy, op.cit., p. 51.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., p. 53. Cf. J. Derrida, 'From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve', in *Writing and Difference*, op. cit., pp. 251-277.

<sup>104</sup>J. Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, (Chicago & London, 1979), p. 103. Also cited in Hoy, *ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>105</sup>Hoy, *ibid.*

<sup>106</sup>Richard Rorty, 'Two Meanings of 'Logocentrism': A Reply to Norris', *Essays on Heidegger and Others*, (Cambridge U.P., 1991), p. 108. Rorty states: "I find Heidegger and Derrida among the most powerful and fascinating writers of my time. They speak to my condition. But I doubt very much that they speak to a universal human, or even a universal Western, condition. My own shifty Matter and stalwart Form, dubious mind-dependent redness and reliable mind-independent squareness, the starry a priori above and the grimy a posteriori below, Hegel's rose, Nietzsche's tarantulas, and Quine's rabbit stages. These are powerful, but not universally compelling, images. Their power over me, I take it, comes from the way I happened to acquire them, the way they happened to interlock with, and eventually to symbolize, my own idiosyncratic hopes and fears."

<sup>107</sup>Hoy, *ibid.*, p. 59, my italics. Hoy also cites Foucault as stating that "if you read the *Phaedrus*, you will see that this passage is secondary to another one which is fundamental and which is in line with the theme which runs throughout the end of the text. It does not matter whether a text is written or oral -the problem is whether or not the discourse in question gives access to the question of truth." Foucault, 'Afterword', in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Rabinow, Michel Foucault: *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, (Chicago, 2nd ed., 1983), p. 245-6.

<sup>108</sup>J. Derrida, *Limited Inc.*, trans. Samuel Weber, (Evanston: Northwestern U.P., 1988), p. 3.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., p.9.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., pp. 9-10.

<sup>114</sup>Jacques Derrida, *Feu la cendre*, (Paris: Des femmes, 1987)

<sup>115</sup>Erasure is the method that is implied in *différance*, for it is the method of both negating and keeping in deferred time and space that which has been negated and kept. As such, 'erasure', or



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*différance*, is very similar to Hegel's *Aufheben*; that which distinguishes them, as we shall see later in the text, is the limit, the economy of meaning that Hegel imposes on *Aufheben*, but that Derrida seeks to explode. Derrida would add that Hegel is necessarily caught in this limit because of his attachment to logocentric system of thought.

<sup>116</sup>Madan Sarup, *An Introductory Guide to Post-structuralism and Postmodernism*, (London: Harvester, 1993), pp. 36-37.

<sup>117</sup>John Llewelyn, "A Point of Almost Absolute Proximity to Hegel", *Deconstruction and Philosophy: The Texts of Jacques Derrida*, John Sallis (ed.), (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 87.

<sup>118</sup>Sarup, op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>119</sup>Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p. 130; cited in Sarup, *ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>120</sup>Sarup, *ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>121</sup>Eagleton, op. cit., p. 138.

<sup>122</sup>V. Leitch, *Deconstructive Criticism: An Advanced Introduction*, (London: Hutchinson, 1983), p. 246; cited in Sarup, op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>123</sup>Sarup, *ibid.*

<sup>124</sup>Eagleton, op. cit., p. 147; Sarup, *ibid.*

<sup>125</sup>G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. W.H. Johnston and L.G. Struthers, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1929), Vol. 1, p. 132.

<sup>126</sup>Jacques Derrida, "Différance," *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass, (University of Chicago: The Harvester Press Ltd., 1982), p. 7.

<sup>127</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup>In *Science of Logic* Hegel explains: "Reality may seem to be an ambiguous word, since it is employed for different and even opposite determinations. In the philosophic sense, for instance, a merely empirical reality is spoken of as a worthless existence. On the other hand, if a thought, a concept, or a theory is said to have no reality, the meaning is that it has no actuality; while in itself or as a concept of the idea, for instance, of a Platonic Republic might very well be true. The idea here is not denied its value, and it is allowed to remain by the side of the reality. But as opposed to "mere" ideas and "mere" concepts, the real is taken as the only truth. -If it is a one-sided sense in which external existence is taken as the criterion of the truth of a content, it is equally one-sided if the idea, the essence or internal feeling is imagined as indifferent to external existence or is even regarded as excellent in proportion as it is removed from Reality.", *Science of Logic*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 124.

<sup>131</sup>"Baillie, the English translator of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, translates *Herrschaft* as "lordship," while Hyppolite, the French translator, translates *Herr* as *maître*, making the "master's" operation *maîtrise*. *Maîtrise* also has the sense of mastery, of grasp, and Derrida continually plays on this double sense, which is lost in English. The difference between sovereignty and lordship (*maîtrise*) is that sovereignty does not seek to grasp (*maîtriser*) concepts but rigorously to explode them.", translator's note, *Writing and Difference*, op. cit., note 8, p. 334.

<sup>132</sup>*Writing and Difference*, *ibid.*, p. 254.

<sup>133</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 255-56.

<sup>134</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 256.

<sup>135</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 257.

<sup>136</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 262.

<sup>138</sup>Bataille, *Hegel, la mort*, p. 38; cited in Derrida, *ibid.*, p. 258.

<sup>139</sup>Derrida, *ibid.*, p. 271.

<sup>140</sup>*Ibid.*

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<sup>141</sup>Cf. *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, op. cit., translated by A.V. Miller whose definition of Master and Slave is Lord and Bondsman.

<sup>142</sup>Hegel, *ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>143</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup>*Ibid.*, Derrida defines the verb 'solicit' in its old Latin sense of *sollicitare*, i.e. "to shake as a whole, to make tremble in entirety."

<sup>145</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>146</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>148</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>151</sup>Derrida, "The Ends of Man, " *Margins...*, op. cit., p. 121.

<sup>152</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 135.

<sup>155</sup>On this Derrida returns to a Nietzschean distinction between the superior man and the superman: "*The difference between the superior man and the superman.* Beneath this rubric is signaled ... the division that is announced, perhaps, between two *relèves* of man. We know how, at the end of *Zarathustra*, at the moment of the "sign," when *das Zeichen kommt*, Nietzsche distinguishes, in the greatest proximity, in a strange resemblance and an ultimate complicity, at the eve of the last separation, of the great Noontime, between the superior man (*höhere Mensch*) and the superman (*Übermensch*). The first is abandoned to his distress in a last movement of pity. the latter -who is not the last man- awakens and leaves, without turning back to what he leaves behind him. He burns his text and erases the traces of his steps. His laughter then will burst out, directed toward a return which no longer will have the form of the metaphysical repetition of humanism, nor, doubtless, "beyond" metaphysics, the form of a memorial or a guarding of the meaning of Being, the form of the house and of the truth of Being. He will dance outside the house, the *aktive vergesslichkeit*, the "active forgetting" and the cruel (*grausam*) feast of which the *Genealogy of Morals* speaks." *Ibid.*, pp. 135-36.

<sup>156</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>157</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 21.

**Conclusion: Consequences of  
Postmodernism**

According to Raymond Aron, "Sartre's Marxism, coming just after the war, arrived too late: by what sort of aberration did he insist upon confusing 'socialism that was coming in from the cold', revolution from above, and the accession to power by the party thanks to the presence of the Red Army, with revolutionary humanism or the realization of man by the revolution?"<sup>1</sup> Indeed, as existential Marxism came on the French intellectual scene, it also seemed too late since structuralism had already marked its presence. This perhaps indicates a reason for which postmodernist writers have consciously distanced their work from Sartre's. A self-professed return to existentialist thought would in any case be at odds with Sartre's position. That is, if Sartre were to adhere to his own philosophy, then he would expect that those who were to follow him should be 'imaginative' enough to approach the definition of their world, their history, in different terms and through different means. Furthermore, the events of May '68, and those more recent such as 'the fall of the Berlin wall', made clear to all intellectuals, philosophers, and writers that Marxism, as today's philosophy, has lost all credibility, and that we have to find an alternative philosophy capable of defining our existence. Is postmodernism such a philosophy? The answer is equivocal.

In one sense, and especially when viewed from an existentialist perspective, postmodernism appears more as an attempt at innovation than at philosophising. This is displayed in its heterogeneous and eclectic approach to theorising, philosophising, and deconstructing. Its authors have each taken the individual task of illuminating, through some 'innovative' method, the misconceptions of past approaches to philosophy, and to the definition of human ontology. They have taken upon themselves to 'undo' what the Western philosophical tradition had heretofore established, but in so doing they claim that what is actually new is this very process of undoing, and refuse to give any other message to their followers than: "Sapere aude! (Dare to know!)"<sup>2</sup> With this sentiment, Foucault wrote a series of histories designed to establish the 'madness' of our times, as well as the necessity for each of us to 'create' ourselves through the knowledge of the forces that have come to shape our society, psyche, and sexuality. Lyotard quite clearly establishes the postmodern condition on 'disillusionment' with the present in his political writings, and urges the individual to be wary of intellectuals who do little but legitimise oppressive power structures. He poses as the philosopher-King, and suggests that we should be doubtful of 'meta-narratives' and *ought* to learn to think and act for ourselves *independently* from intellectuals and members of their ilk. Of these postmodernists, perhaps Derrida is the closest to existentialist philosophy, for he takes to heart the



project of deconstruction of language as a means of knowing and interpreting texts in terms of their *a*-historical content. With Sartre he shares the belief that "we cannot control what those who follow us will make of our actions,"<sup>3</sup> hence we cannot choose to be read as we may have thought we ought to.

As established in Chapter I of Part III, Sartre's critique of Hegel's idealism is based on the nature of the latter's use of the 'dialectic'. In Hegelian dialectic a resolution is established at the end of the opposition, whereas for Sartre a second negation takes place. According to Sartre, freedom is not achieved within society, within being, but outwith all social and political context. Sartre's philosophy implies the existence of a permanent rebellion, a standpoint which continually breaks with the established order. Existentialism rebels against the very structure of social existence, against labour, and against nature as such. It affirms, more so than any other philosophy, the distinction between the human and the machine. From a historical viewpoint, it resembles the Humanist outrage at science, its disbelief that Prometheus has become a mere stone.<sup>4</sup> Postmodernism is not far from expressing this very fear. In fact, it is this fear of having become totally reified that postmodernists express, for they reject Marxism and Hegelianism on the basis that both philosophies demand that individuals become subject to matter. The very need to create the self expresses the fear of being *reduced* to a product of a 'creation'. This fear of losing power over the machines humanity has created leads one to think that it is grounded in a more insidious and latent fear, i.e. of having occur to them what has already occurred to God. It seems that in humanity's recognition that it killed God, its Creator, it is now afraid of becoming victim of its own machines, its own creations.<sup>5</sup>

However, if freedom resides solely in imagination, and is socially expressed solely through words, then what of life? Is one to be oppressed everywhere and in every activity wherein a given interaction with nature is present? What of those who do neither reading nor writing: do they not experience freedom in a social context, rather than simply through some form of imaginative escapism? In postmodernist writing there are some answers which do not break away from the existentialist position. It is often alluded to, if not clearly expressed (Lyotard and Baudrillard), that Western individuals today live in a post-industrial society in which the 'ideal situation' demands that all be 'literate', and that physical labour be replaced by white-collar paper pushing and through the computer screen. Sooner or later, the 'ideal situation' will be reached, and our dependence on machines will grow to the extent that our societies will operate solely on language. Freedom in this society cannot rely

any longer on such philosophies as Hegelianism and Marxism, for they belong to a past age of toil and self-affirmation through matter. Today's action and self-actualisation occurs in and through language.

This position appears plausible if one attaches to Hegelianism a Marxist dialectic. That is, insofar as Marxist dialectic has been defined by Sartre as materialism and fetishism, thereby indicating how Sartre, through his view of freedom as imagination, has read Marx, and consequently read Hegel through this reading of Marx. Yet for Hegel, self-actualisation, and hence synthesis, is not a process that is embedded in material life, nor is it a process that necessarily 'objectifies' or 'reifies' the Other, as individual, of society. The realm of matter is of high importance for Hegel, since he believes in the actualisation of freedom in the present in terms of self-determination and self-positing, a realm which demands a certain amount of self-objectification. However, for Hegel, the *other* as means toward actualisation can *also* be, in the first instance, a concept, a function and a thought. According to Hegel, a writer is as much of a social and political subject, as an active being, a legislator, or a fire-fighter, because all action commences with thought. However, unlike Sartre whose definition of action is attached to non-material sphere, Hegel believes that the ultimate freedom consists of thought implemented through the will as action *in-the-world*. What's more, this position is also shared by Marx. In *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx states very clearly that "the chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism (that of Feuerbach included) is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or of contemplation, but not as *sensuous human activity, practice*, not subjectively;"<sup>6</sup> and that Feuerbach, "wants sensuous objects, really distinct from the thought objects, but he *does not* conceive human activity itself as *objective activity*."<sup>7</sup> Marx also states in *The German Ideology* that "this mode of production must not be considered simply as being the production of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part. As individuals express their lives, so they are."<sup>8</sup> Postmodernism's misinterpretation of Marx is identical to the existentialist reading of *Theses on Feuerbach* made by Kostas Axelos, who suggested that "Marx wanted sensible objects to be superior to ideal objects; but he did not grasp human activity itself as problematic activity."<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, for Derrida, the importance of language in bringing about the actualisation of subjectivity through the process of *Aufhebung*, is exemplified in its

capacity to go through the individual, that is through the tympanum, the ear-drum.<sup>10</sup> Language, therefore, has a physical dimension, one which enters the body but does not alter it, and thus it can be a medium through which an actualisation of action (praxis) is established, an action which alters only thought, and not the physical body. Here lies the Sartrean emphasis on the expression of individual subjectivity through action, while not adversely affecting the possibility of the *Other* to acquire freedom and self-knowledge, i.e. by never forcing the *Other* into a process in which subjectivity has to go through the material world, and hence become objectified. This implies that in effect, as mentioned above, Hegel, according to Derrida, conceives of self-actualisation through objectification, a conception which loses sight of the very implication of Derrida's understanding of *Aufhebung*, i.e. to maintain and transcend. However, for Hegel, this understanding of *Aufhebung* would imply that one element has been left in suspension (maintained), and thereby made obsolete (transcended) by the *Other*. This equally implies that there was no change in the nature of either, but only that the position of one has been supplanted by the other. By contrast, according to Hegel, *Aufhebung* is a process which cannot maintain either the *one* or the *other* because it has to alter both. *Aufhebung* is an on-going process of *becoming*, of evolution, through which the individual reaches in self-determination a new mode of *being*, and hence new possibilities for *becoming*.

In this reading of both Marx and Hegel, postmodernists maintain the Sartrean triad of imaginative process, i.e. 'constituting, isolating and nihilating', and as such their understanding of freedom is based upon what Hegel calls "dialectic as a negative movement,"<sup>11</sup> rather than a synthesis. According to such a theory, the individual can never be reconciled to freedom-in-the-world, but must always seek to break away from social existence. Postmodernism thereby appears as an anti-social ideology which seeks to establish the primacy of the individual over society. Its claim that it expresses an effort to champion justice of the one against the many is in fact unfounded, for it seeks to explode the very idea of justice, allowing a subjective and purely individualist, often violent, practice of 'justice' to emerge. However, in so positing itself, postmodernism has acquired wide appeal with minority groups; and in effect, although indirectly, specific social injustices committed against women and minorities have since gained a hearing, and have benefitted significantly from the movement. This is where adhering to postmodernism is most nebulous, for it raises the question of where to draw the line between the establishment of a fairer society on the one hand, and the threatening effects of the weakening of social ties and the promotion of social and political atomism, on the other. In its own way,



postmodernism effectively posits the first moment of negation needed in a dialectic, but falls short of paving the way toward a 'synthesis' because it proceeds to undo what it has so far achieved, i.e. it 'nihilates' instead of 'yields'. In its capacity to reconcile rather than separate, to allow evolution rather than regression, clearer self-identification and self-actualisation rather than objectification and reification, Hegelian philosophy remains important for the manner in which we view ourselves as social beings, and as subjects in our own right. If interpretation is preferred to deconstruction, self-knowledge to self-creation, and actuality to imagination, we may find far more fulfilled individuals in society whose actions would not seek to nihilate, but to build a world in which individuals may eventually treat each other as subjects in themselves, while remaining in touch with their world, their existential space.

The existentialist reading of both Hegel and Marx is disturbing, for in this refutation of their theories the postmodernists commit more than an intellectual error, they equally posit their theories as essentially fallacious, discounting them as impracticable and lacking in any profound value. In positing the present as post-industrial, they are also discounting these theories' applicability to the understanding of contemporary society. More disturbing is the fact that with the absence of philosophies attempting to define the manner in which individuals become capable of expressing, through a chosen activity, their subjectivity in society, the postmodern narratives, with their eclectic and inaccurate use of past traditions, plunge modern perception into chaos. The message they relay, stating that subjectivity is non-existent, and that we are only subjects in so far as we can act, has the capacity of promoting both a sense of desperation and an urgent need to act. Such a combination can only turn into a will-to-power which seeks confirmation achievable primarily through violence. In societies whose biggest problem is crime, postmodern critiques can only maintain belief that this is our epoch, our world. However, what happened to the social conscience of the writer, the critic, the philosopher? As with Sartre, the Humanists and Romantics who preceded him, postmodern writers seek first and foremost the affirmation of their own personal subjectivity through the act of creation. However, unlike the Humanists and Romantics, they no longer depend on God or divinity to define their personal self-worth; they are their own absolute-subject, and are so insofar as they are able to narrate the history of their present. What is needed however, is a true expression of social conscience, one that existentialism has failed to maintain in its embrace of Marxism, and which remains lacking in the postmodern ideology.



Postmodernism thereby appears as an intellectual movement much in the Platonist tradition, sharing its concerns with the Humanists and the Romantics. It seeks implicitly to maintain distinctions within society, basing them on the 'quality' of the creative mind, and the intellectual capacity to perceive the ideal as opposed to the real. It, therefore, cannot help but appear elitist. However, its elitism has a more dangerous twist: it is devoid of any Platonist social duty, and hence its telos does not include the wish to lead the 'disadvantaged' towards a more accurate understanding of the power of creation. Rather, it appears as a self-indulgent and self-serving practice, which at best remains incomprehensible and hence neutral, and at worst promotes the development of anti-social sentiment and anarchy.

With all this, however, one is left with the question whether the world is indeed operating entirely according to the postmodern perception of freedom and subjectivity, or whether there are examples of the type of freedom that is implied in Hegel's system, as well as this dissertation's interpretation of it. To conclude this thesis, I will try to address this question in a highly schematic manner by considering the current debates regarding the future of the development of the European Union (EU). So far, it has been widely argued that the institutional proposals regarding the possible shape of the EU, as it has been fostered by Jacques Delors and the rest of the Euro-federalists, seems to be based on principles that are essentially antiquated. These include the belief that a) the nation-state is obsolete; b) that a United States of Europe would be like the USA; c) that a federal EU is needed to defend European interests against the U.S. and Japan; and d) that federalists stand for peace and progress, whereas those who defend national sovereignty are old-fashioned nationalists who live in the past.<sup>12</sup> Literature abounds on the impossibility of a federalist Europe, due to its multi-national, heterogeneous, multi-linguistic, and diversified social, economic and political structure. However, what these criticisms equally indicate, is that the proposed principles upon which a social, economic and political union can be based carry with them the stigma of the old 'establishment', i.e. the old belief in the establishment of a super-power that is meant to override the interests of all nations -and citizens- involved. This standpoint betrays the "old-fashioned terms about the international system and the world balance of power"<sup>13</sup> held by the Euro-federalists. It equally mirrors the traditional Hobbesian 'liberal' idea, stipulating that the *raison d'être* of political institutions lies in their capacity to protect against invasion (military or monetary), and to maintain absolute control (save for the right to put the citizen's life in danger) over the functioning of society. This is a type of society that would certainly deny any form of subjectivity (self-

determination) which would affect the citizens of the states, and which constitute the latter's social and political body, as much as it would world peace. In the face of such a potentially adverse form of identity-deprivation, as is suggested by the Euro-federalists' proposed EU, protests and violent upheavals would most certainly follow. Examples of such stirrings can be witnessed in the rise of neo-fascist parties in Italy demanding the division of the country into two regions, north and south. Neo-nazi dissident movements in Germany take physical action against guest workers, asylum seekers, and southern-looking individuals. In France, the parliament is 'rationalised', i.e. it exercises no control over the executive, while the prospect of mass immigration plus the sense of lost national identity has led to riots all over the country and the possibility of a neo-fascist president.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, these appear as a mild reaction in comparison to what may ensue given the establishment of such a European Federal State.

However, this does not need to be so. According to Alan Sked, there are possibilities to achieve a united Europe, but without the oppressive federalism espoused by Jacques Delors. After all, the EU has not been fully ratified by all nations concerned, and much is actually being done to reach consensus. Changes put forward by Sked suggest an alternative set of principles on which the institutional proposals can be based, and which greatly enhance the execution, at least in principle, of the project of a united Europe. These principles include the need to protect and increase individual freedom, not only of the nation, but also of the nationals. This can be done by creating fewer possible layers of government, preserving flexibility of structure, guaranteeing human rights, peace, as well as national sovereignty. Sked seeks to propose a system in which individuals are able to preserve their national identity, and merge voluntarily (through the method of active democratic participation in local and municipal governments) with the forward attitude of a united Europe. In the quest for lasting peace and cooperation, these principles equally demand that politicians, on the national and European level, be prepared to reject the positing of a united Europe in terms which qualify it as aspiring to achieve an imperial or superpower status. Sked's proposal suggests that the EU be governed by a parliament which is based upon agreed legislation operating as a common forum. Of the structures that are of the highest importance to individuals and nations alike, is the EU Court of Justice, which has already dealt with significant cases affecting nationals within their own country. Such a system will give access to individuals or groups to present their cases independently from the social and political constraints present in their particular country, and thereby receive a fair hearing which may overturn

decisions made in the latter's courts.<sup>15</sup> This judicial process is of great importance, for it allows the representation of groups, such as the IRA in Britain, or the Basque Party in France, whose concerns are not heard in their own country, often leading them to resort to violence and terrorism. Recognition of the social and political identity of such groups is therefore important, since individuals obtain identity, self-consciousness and subjectivity within their chosen group.

A thorough discussion of the workings of the EU is not necessary at this point, it suffices to say that the principles put forth by Sked help illustrate, to a certain degree, that the Hegelian theory of the state has validity and applicability in today's political arena. Individuals, like individual nation states in the EU, need to acknowledge a common legislation, a common purpose and direction in order to be able to participate in the definition and determination of the country they wish to inhabit. The EU appears as a collection of nations, resembling to a large degree Hegel's corporations. The democratic system in these countries would ensure the participation of all concerned, a fact that has been clearly demonstrated in the use of referendums. Furthermore, the Executive cannot change legislation without the direct acquiescence of the member states. Also, both the Hegelian state and the EU would be headed by a president whose decisions would reflect the common will of the citizens, as made clear by their official representatives. Unlike the Hegelian state, however, the European Court (the equivalent to which is not available in Hegel's state) would ensure that justice is meted out to minorities whose rights are being compromised by the ideological and/or cultural prejudices of their country. Within this framework, the EU would provide alternative means to the achievement of individual/group representation which would satisfy, to a great extent, the need for recognition of identity and difference. This would equally signify a greater form of political liberty which occurs because the political sphere necessarily expands when taking into account the diversity inherently present in the nature and structure of the EU. Because nation-states, like Hegel's, depended solely on the 'myth' of a 'common' and 'homogeneous' identity, their constitutions were based upon criteria that often appeared oppressive of religious, ethnic and ideological minorities. The EU may do away with this 'myth', and may operate in a manner that will seek the achievement of synthesis between needs and beliefs.

In the national and international debates surrounding the main issues of the achievement of a united Europe, one cannot escape the opposition present between those who reject it according to a 'postmodernist' critique, and those who seek to



maintain it through a 'modernist' argument. The postmodernists reject the idea because they believe that the individual is incapable of achieving freedom in and through the political arena. Freedom in this world is itself an illusion, and all one can aspire to is to be able to create from *nothingness* an identity that is of his/her own making. The modernists, on the other hand, argue that freedom is only *actual* when it is *real*, i.e. that a united Europe would be capable of maintaining the freedom of its citizens if it is able to maintain its status in the world as a formidable economic and imperialist power, one that posits the identity of its citizens in and through material means. This opposition provides us with the bi-polar definitions of freedom, i.e. freedom as Spirit, and freedom as absence of physical restraint. Postmodernism uses a Sartrean dialectic which cannot reconcile the individual with the phenomenal world, while the modernists continue to invest in instrumental reason which concentrates on achieving freedom in and through the material world, and therefore cannot reconcile the world with the individual as a being whose essence is thought. Both standpoints go to extremes which prove socially, economically and politically problematic. By advocating human rights and the precedence of the individual to the community, the postmodernists deny individuals their need for a communal identity. Similarly, by defining human teleology in terms of material acquisition, the modernists alienate the individual from a sense of human compassion and friendship present in society, and therefore from a sense of *human* identity. Both standpoints are able to provide the individual and society with one sense of accomplishment. The postmodernists provide self-creation, and the modernists self-affirmation, but neither provide self-determination. Freedom as self-determination remains unfulfilled, because both extremes posit the self as pure determinism, the one spiritual and the other material. Postmodernism cannot posit itself as an acceptable alternative to modernism, i.e. as an ideology seeking to promote a less materialist and fetishist way of identifying the self, because it is caught in the snares of its own limitations. It too has to contend with the social atomism and elitism underlying its founding principles.

The problems posed by a united Europe are helpful in bringing forth issues that have not been discussed in the West since the creation of the nation-state, hence since the 19th century. It is unsurprising that questions of identity, nation, territoriality, and the future are being dealt with daily, and are no longer put aside as superfluous or secondary to the functioning of the economy, as was the case in the last century. I should like to add that it is highly unlikely that a federalist Europe, such as reviled by many, would come into being, and the reason for this would be simply because the collective, i.e. the majority of individuals in each European



nation, would directly (referendum), or indirectly (violent riots and neo-fascist behaviour) make their *will* heard. This is possible because contemporary society, although branded oppressive and limiting by its postmodern critics, reflects the essential changes that have taken place since the Humanists sought freedom in terms of the overcoming of social oppression in and through religion. The notions of identity, difference, freedom and subjectivity have all been identified and are made distinct. They are now viewed as essential to the nature and value of life itself. Recent political developments point to the possibility that there exists a strong need to overcome our bi-polar understanding of human nature and its purpose through synthesis. For this reason, we will not need to wish for the Hegelian Prussian state to return, but will actively fashion a social and political matrix that is able to provide individuals with the means to achieve a freedom as the actuality that they have determined.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Raymond Aron, *History and the Dialectic of Violence*, trans. Barry Cooper, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975), p. xxi.

<sup>2</sup>Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?", *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Lewis White Beck, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), p. 288.

<sup>3</sup>Sartre, *Truth and Existence*, trans. Adrian van den Hoven, (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. viii. According to Sartre, "A long time ago we got rid of our grandfathers' ghosts. We should now get rid of our great-grandchildren's ghosts." Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Hans Blumenberg, *Myth*, trans. M. Wallace, (MIT Press, 1985); in this work, Blumenberg gives a highly interesting interpretation of the value of the interpretation of myth of Prometheus in the understanding of how individuals view themselves (and have done so in history) in relation to divinity since the Greek era. He argues that modernity has reduced Prometheus to stone.

<sup>5</sup>This is exemplified in many Hollywood movies where the machine takes over and seeks to annihilate humans. Postmodernism seems to be professing a fear that was already present during the Romantic era, captured most poignantly in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

<sup>6</sup>Karl Marx, *Karl Marx Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan, (Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 156, my italics.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., my italics.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>9</sup>Kostas Axelos, *Vers la pensée planétaire*, (Paris, 1964), p. 172; also cited in Mark Poster, *ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>10</sup>See Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, op.cit., Preface.

<sup>11</sup>Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, op.cit., §204, p. 124.

<sup>12</sup>Alan Sked, "A Proposal for European Union," *The Cost of Europe*, edited by P. Minford, (Manchester U.P., 1992), p.33.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>14</sup>Horst Teltschik, 'A new world order' and 'German Comments', *Review of Politics and Culture*, no. 24 (October 1991), pp. 512 and 1011.

<sup>15</sup>Britain has been judged as counter to human rights and equalities in many cases and this since 1972 with the case of the East Indians in Eastern Africa. Also in case of its own nationals, e.g. cases of suspension of female military personnel without pay due to pregnancy, and the case of the fishermen in Devon whose appeal to the High Court of European Human Rights earned them financial and monetary rights withheld by the British government.

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